Tuesday 11 February 2025

Amateur Photographer

PREMIUM EDITION
FEBRUARY 2025

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FIRST LOOK

OM System OM-3

The **latest camera tech** in a stylish retro body – Micro Four Thirds hits back!

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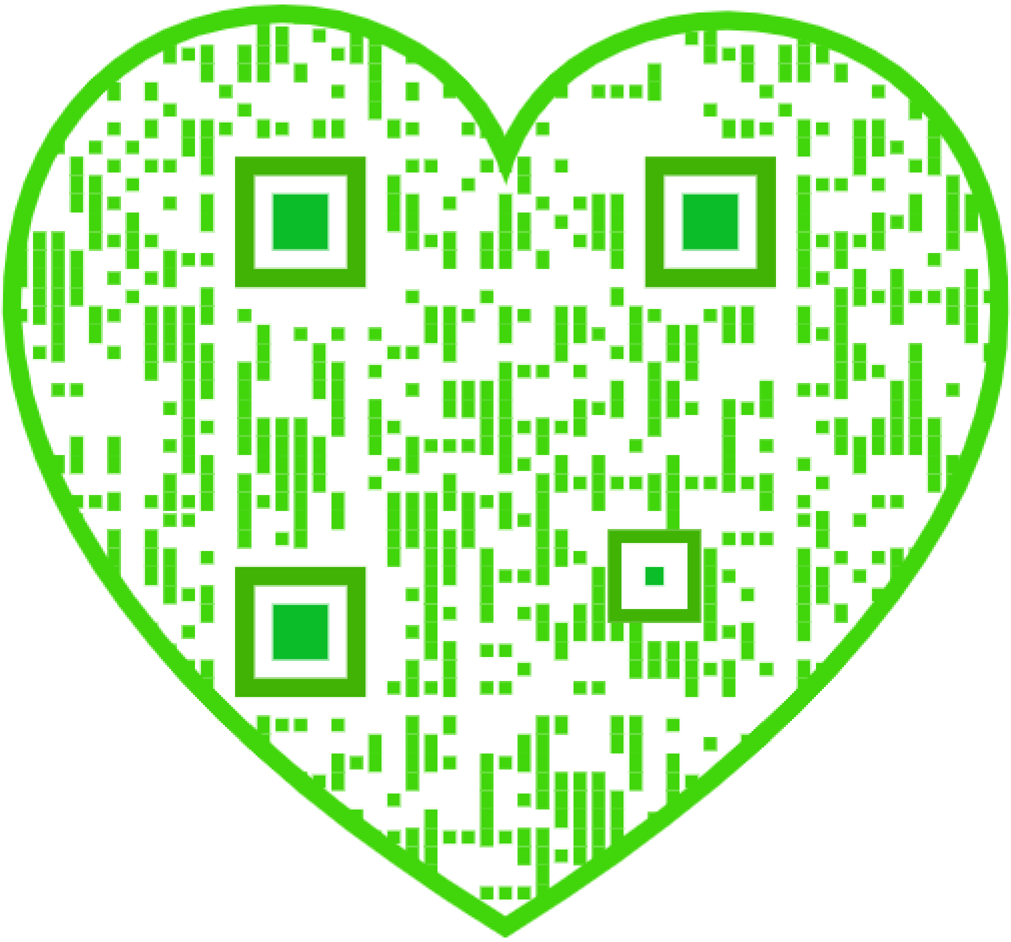
Fujifilm X-M5 Will this small, powerful hybrid please both stills and video users?



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Inside this issue

3 7 days

4 First look: OM System OM-3

8 Viewpoint

10 Books and exhibitions

12 It's good to share

16 How to sell your images to the press

23 Fujifilm X-M5 review

29 Viltrox AF 28mm F4.5 lens review

32 Reader portfolio

38 APOY R10 results

44 APOY 2024 overall winners!

49 Second-hand classic

53 Tech talk

55 Full-frame DSLR bargains

61 Streamline your kit

65 How to sell your old kit

68 Budget-friendly analogue

72 Inbox and This week we asked...

75 Best cameras under £300

80 Readers' favourite second-hand buys

85 Best Buys

98 Final analysis

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OM SYSTEM
OM-3

4

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29

Welcome

The cost of living crisis shows no sign of abating, which means that many of us have to make compromises as to how we spend our resources. Photography can be expensive but it doesn't need to be. Cameras have been great for many years now, which means you don't have to save up for the latest kit, and there are millions of used lenses floating around. Photography also offers opportunities to make money too, enough to further subsidise the cost of our hobby. This issue is dedicated to pursuing photography on a budget, and is filled with tips and suggestions to help you save money. We also test Fujifilm's latest mini camera and take a first look at a stonking new model from OM System.

Nigel Atherton, Editor

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COVER PICTURE, BACKGROUND © GETTY IMAGES

Our cover image is a composite, created by Nigel Atherton, and illustrates our money-saving issue

THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS

ANDY WESTLAKE
Technical Editor

Andy takes a first look at the new OM System OM-3; and tests a cheap Viltrox lens

ANDREW FUSEK PETERS

Nature pro Andrew reveals his secrets for how to get your pictures published in the press

JON STAPLEY

Bag a bargain – AP regular Jon shares tips for finding great second-hand deals on full-frame DSLRs

AMY DAVIES
Features Editor

Amy advises on the best ways to get rid of unwanted kit to raise cash; and tests the X-M5

MIKE CRAWFORD

Budget-friendly film photography: photographer and expert printer Mike explores options to save costs

AILSA MCWHINNIE

It's the final round of APOY! Our APOY co-ordinator reveals the R10 results and the overall winners

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OM System OM-3

This new Micro Four Thirds model places cutting-edge tech in a stylish retro body design. **Andy Westlake** takes a first look

OM SYSTEM
OM-3
COLOR MONO
ART
CRT

At a glance

£1,699 body only

£1,999 with 12-45mm F4 lens

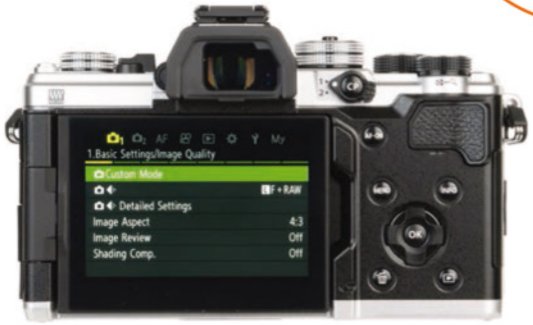
- 20MP Four Thirds stacked BSI-CMOS sensor
- ISO 200-25,600 (standard)
- Up to 120fps shooting
- 2.36m-dot, 0.68x OLED viewfinder
- 3in, 1.62m-dot fully articulated touchscreen
- C4K 60fps video, Full HD up to 240fps

Classic design
The body is the same size as Olympus OM 35mm SLRs, with deliberately reminiscent styling.

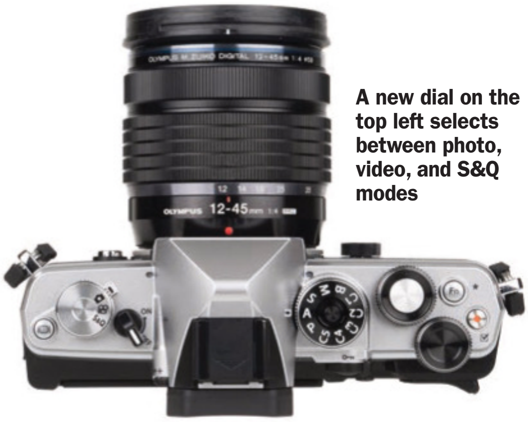
CP button
A new dedicated button gives direct access to OM System's unique computational photography features.

Robust
The OM-3 boasts a metal body shell that's dustproof, splashproof, and freezeproof.

High spec
You get the same blistering speed and sophisticated autofocus features as the flagship OM-1 Mark II.



Rear controls closely resemble the smaller OM-5



A new dial on the top left selects between photo, video, and S&Q modes

The OM System OM-3 is a new mid-range Micro Four Thirds camera from the company we used to know as Olympus. As its name implies, it sits between the flagship OM-1 Mark II and the smaller OM-5 in the line-up, with most of its technology inherited from the former, but a body layout that borrows heavily from the latter. And well, just look at it. It's gorgeous.

That classic body design is deliberately styled after Olympus OM 35mm film SLRs from the 1980s, and it's almost exactly the same size, too. To be clear, though, the OM-3 isn't specifically related to its film namesake; if anything, it bears a stronger resemblance to the original OM-1. Don't be fooled by the retro looks, either; inside it's a thoroughly modern camera that's kitted out with all of OM System's unique computational photography tricks, plus some compelling creative options, too.

From the OM-1 Mark II, the OM-3 borrows the same 20.4MP Four-Thirds format stacked CMOS sensor and Truepic X processor. This sensor employs a quad-pixel design that enables cross-type phase-detection autofocus anywhere in the frame. It offers a sensitivity range of ISO 200-25,600 as standard, plus extended ISO 80-102,400 settings.

The OM-3 is blazingly quick, too. It's capable of shooting at fully 120 frames per second with focus fixed, and 50fps with continuous autofocus. As for video, you get Cine 4K at up to 60fps, and Full HD up to 240fps. AI subject detection is also included, and capable of recognising and focusing on humans, birds, animals, trains, cars, or airplanes. Unlike many recent cameras, though, there's no auto mode, so you have to select your subject type in advance.

In-body image stabilisation is built in, promising 6.5 stops of shake reduction with most lenses, increasing to 7.5 stops when used with optically stabilised Olympus/OM System lenses that support Sync IS. The IS system also enables an 80MP pixel-shift multi-shot mode when the camera is tripod-mounted, with a 50MP handheld

OM SYSTEM
OM-3

The new OM-3 is designed to look like a film SLR

multi-shot mode onboard too. With most brands, such modes are barely practical, but on OM System cameras I've found them to be genuinely usable.

These multi-shot modes are unusually easily engaged via a new 'CP', or Computational Photography button. This also gives access to the firm's unique Live ND function, which duplicates the effect of a physical neutral density filter, plus Live GND, which mimics a graduated ND filter. In addition, it provides a shortcut to focus stacking, high dynamic range (HDR) and multiple exposure options.

It's become increasingly common to see cameras offering external access to creative colour modes, and the OM-3 has a dial on the front for this purpose. But this isn't merely following a trend – instead it's inherited from the cult-classic Olympus PEN-F from 2016. It gives access to a range of attractive colour and monochrome looks that are almost infinitely user-customisable, along with the firm's Art Filters and unique Color Creator option. This is all great news for those who prefer to create their shots in-camera, rather than in post-processing.

OM-5-like design

While the OM-3 may look like a classic film camera, operationally it's much more akin to an electronic DSLR. In terms of layout, it is much like the OM-5, although it's noticeably larger, with the body measuring approximately 140x87x50mm and weighing in at 500g. That flat front means there's no real finger grip, but a small thumb hook on the back provides a slightly more secure hold. The body is made of metal and fully weather-sealed.

There's a conventional mode dial on top, with twin top-plate electronic dials for changing the exposure settings. A new dial on the top left selects between photo, video, and Slow and Quick (S&Q) modes. Sadly, though, there's no joystick; instead you have to use a 4-way d-pad to position the focus area.

As for the viewfinder and screen, these are pretty much the same as on the OM-5. That means you get a 2.36m-dot OLED EVF with a relatively modest 0.68x magnification, plus a 3in touchscreen LCD with a side-hinged fully articulated design. Also like the OM-5, there's only a single SD card slot rather than two.

First impressions

I have to be honest – the moment I set eyes on the OM System OM-3, it was love at first sight. It looks absolutely fabulous, and has a lovely tactile build quality and fabulous retro charm. There's a charisma to the OM-3 that we haven't seen from the firm's cameras since the OM-D E-M5 Mark II and PEN-F almost a decade ago.

OM System has also put together an enticing blend of high-end specifications and in-camera creativity. Not only do you get sophisticated subject recognition and super-fast shooting, but also that colour dial on the front positively encourages creative shooting. There's a vast range of Micro Four Thirds lenses available too, which tend to be smaller and lighter than those for APS-C or full-frame cameras. This means the OM-3 looks like it will be a really compelling option for photographers who'd like a capable, creative and portable camera setup.

OM SYSTEM 17 mm 1:1.8 II
0.25m/0.82ft-∞ SPLASH PROOF
OM SYSTEM 25 mm 1:1.8 II
0.25m/0.82ft-∞ SPLASH PROOF

Three updated OM System optics

Alongside the OM-3, OM System has also announced three new lenses. Or at least, updated versions of older Olympus designs. All use the same basic optical designs as their predecessors but come with various design updates and improvements.

First up, the M.Zuiko Digital 17mm F1.8 II and M.Zuiko Digital 25mm F1.8 II are small, lightweight primes that offer full-frame equivalent focal lengths of 34mm and 50mm, respectively. Both share a new external design with dustproof and splashproof metal barrels. They share a 46mm filter thread and employ the same LH-49B hood, which now comes as standard.

Compared to the older Olympus model, the 17mm F1.8 II also does without a push-pull manual focus ring, replaced by resolutely conventional control instead. It's set to cost £479, which is about £80 more than the current model's street price. Meanwhile, the 25mm F1.8 II gains more attractive styling but just a small increase in price, at £399 rather than £379.

Revamped super-telephoto zoom

OM System has also revealed a revised long telephoto zoom, in the shape of the M.Zuiko Digital ED 100-400mm F5.6-6.3 IS II. While this looks very much like its predecessor, it now boasts full compatibility with the firm's Sync IS, promising up to 7EV of shake reduction. On bodies that don't support Sync IS, it's rated for 4.5EV of stabilisation.

As before, the lens is fully weather-sealed, but it now boasts an official IPX1 rating. It also has a fluorine coating on the front element to repel oil and raindrops. The tripod collar is now removable, should you wish to save a little weight when handholding the lens. If the 800mm equivalent reach isn't long enough, the lens is compatible with 1.4x and 2x teleconverters.

The OM System 100-400mm F5.6-6.3 IS II is set to go on sale in March and cost £1,299.

The 100-400mm II has a removable tripod foot

Canon again looks to compacts to boost sales

CANON has released its latest results for the financial year ending 31 December 2024, with total sales in its Imaging Business Unit increasing by a sizeable 8.8% year-on-year to ¥937.4 billion (around £4.9 billion) and income before income taxes growing by 5.4% to ¥154.3 billion (about £897,606 million).

Going forward, Canon revealed it wants to achieve an 8.2% sales growth for cameras overall, with the focus on increasing its shipments of full-frame cameras – particularly the EOS R1 and EOS R5 Mark II – and expanding sales of RF lenses.

While this is hardly big news, the firm also said it intended to increase production of compact cameras in order to hit its sales target: 'With the spread of social media, compact cameras – which can easily capture images different from those captured by smartphones – are becoming increasingly popular, especially among young people.' Canon cited the ever-growing back orders for its PowerShot G7 X Mark III, a premium compact now selling for inflated prices on the used market thanks to its popularity with social media influencers. Canon will no doubt have noted the huge international success of the Fujifilm X100VI, so it's further evidence that predictions of the imminent death of the digital compact were very premature.

Canon
CANON ZOOM LENS 4.2x IS
8.8-36.8mm 1:1.8-2.8
G7X

There is high demand for the Canon PowerShot G7 X Mark III premium compact on the used market

Outsourcing plans revealed

Canon chairman and CEO Fujio Mitarai has also revealed to Japan's Nikkei business newspaper that the company may outsource production of some cameras as part of a reorganisation of its overseas manufacturing network. 'We can become more asset-light by outsourcing based on production quantity rather than maintaining our own factories,' Mitarai said. He noted that Canon has lost about 1.3 trillion yen in total sales in its camera, copier, multifunction device and printer businesses since the 2008 global financial crisis.

You can see Canon's full 2024 results at bit.ly/canon2024numbers

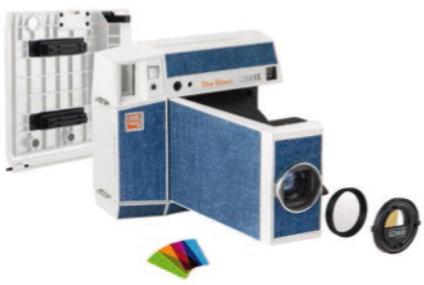
More Sony award winners announced

THE NATIONAL and Regional Award winners have been announced by the Sony World Photography Awards. The winners are selected from the Open competition, which champions the best single images taken in the past year, and the selected photographers receive Sony digital imaging equipment along with inclusion in the Sony World Photography Awards exhibition and book. A total of 56 countries took part in this year's National and Regional Awards, but no UK photographers made the cut.

The overall winners in the Student, Youth, Open and Professional competitions in the awards will be announced on 16 April and will go on display at Somerset House in central London from 17 April to 5 May. See worldphoto.org

© SYED MAHABUBUL KADER/2025 SONY WORLD PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS

Syed Mahabubul Kader from Bangladesh was amongst the winners



The Blues, with accessories – so named after its denim styling

Lomography's instant square deal

LOMOGRAPHY has revealed two new Lomo'Instant Square Glass instant camera editions, named Pemberley and The Blues. These foldable dual-format cameras take both Instax Square and Instax Mini film, and feature a 95mm glass lens with a fixed f/10 aperture, interchangeable Instax Mini and Square backs, and close-up and Splitzer lens attachments. More advanced settings include unlimited multiple exposures, zone-focusing and exposure compensation. The new cameras also offer built-in flash and a 30.5mm filter thread. Both cost £139. See shop.lomography.com

© ESPERHAM/UP25

Last year's winning project was Together Alone by A Espherham

'Unpublished Photo' contest now open

ENTRIES are now open for the 2025 Unpublished Photo competition (UP25). Entrants to the free contest must have been born between 1995 and 2007 and are asked to submit a previously unpublished project of ten images that have a 'thematic and stylistic unity.' The first prize is 3,500 Swiss francs (£3,099) and the four chosen finalists will also get their work exhibited at the Villa Malpensata gallery in Lugano, Switzerland. Entries close on 3 March and you can find more information at www.fcmusei.ch/contest

© MANOLO TY

Exploring Indonesia

NEED inspiration for this year's travels? This charming portrait appears in *Tropics and Traditions: Tales of Indonesia*, a new book by photographer Manolo Ty which captures the diversity and dazzling colour of this fast-changing nation. Ty uses a range of approaches, including aerial and underwater shots, as well as conventional travel portraiture and landscape techniques. The book is published by TeNeues and is available now for £32.

Viewpoint
Amy Davies

Looking for a way to save some cash? Buy an expensive smartphone...

Which phone is the best value overall?

In recent years, there's been an absolute glut of smartphone manufacturers offering better and better devices at prices which are temptingly lower than those produced by the biggest names on the market (Samsung and Apple).

But, what if I were to tell you, that these 'cheap' devices may just set you back more cash in the long run?

Nobody is trying to claim that the latest flagships from Samsung and Apple are cheap. They're not. Let's take a look at the two most recent devices – the Samsung S25 Ultra and the iPhone 16 Pro Max. They're available at a variety of price points depending on how much memory you want, but for the sake of argument let's look at the 256GB option.

- Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra: £1,249
- iPhone 16 Pro Max: £1,199

You can also pick them up at different prices when you buy them via network providers on contract and so on, but here I'm assuming the price when buying them direct from the manufacturer, for ease of comparison.

Now, let's have a look at how some of the more 'value' brands stack up. Some recent devices include the Honor Magic 7 Pro, the Xiaomi 14 Ultra and the OnePlus 13. What can you buy those for?

Premium pricing: IPhones and Samsungs

- Honor Magic 7 Pro 512GB: £1,099
- OnePlus 13 512GB: £899
- Xiaomi 14 Ultra 512GB: £999

All three of these phones are cheaper, *and*, you get more storage for your money. So they must be better value… right?

Well, in the immediate term, absolutely, but longer than that…. not necessarily. These days, most of us are cycling through smartphones every two to three years. When you trade up to a new model, you might dispose of your old phone by trading it in, or by selling it via one of the many reselling sites on the market, such as Back Market, MusicMagpie, envirofone and so on. It's a great way to make back some of your money, while also ensuring that phones don't end up in landfill.

However, you will almost always get more back for a Samsung or an iPhone, particularly an iPhone – even the non-flagship ones – than these lesser-known names, with some seemingly even completely worthless after just a couple of years.

Step back in time

Let's take a look at some examples of older phones to get an idea of how much you can expect depreciation to make a hit on your investment. Let's assume you bought a phone in 2022 and you're looking to trade it in today for a new model.

Some comparative models that you might have potentially considered back then include the iPhone 13 Pro Max, Samsung S22 Ultra, OnePlus 9 Pro, Honor Magic 4 Pro and the Xiaomi 12.

But what did they cost new, and what might you expect to get back for them now? (Resale prices assume the phone is in 'best' condition and unlocked, to show the maximum that you could expect.)

- iPhone 13 Pro Max (256GB): £1,149 / £360. Total outlay = £789
- Samsung S22 Ultra (256GB): £1,249 / £335. Total outlay = £914
- OnePlus 10 Pro (256GB): £899 / £184. Total outlay = £715
- Honor Magic 4 Pro (256GB): £949.99 / £159. Total outlay = £790.99
- Xiaomi 12 Pro (256GB): £1,049 / £167. Total outlay = £882

From this quick comparison – there are hundreds more that you could do – we can see that the best value overall is the OnePlus 10 Pro. However, it should be noted that I could only find one trade-in site that was willing to accept it, whereas every single site accepted both the iPhone and the Samsung.

More interestingly perhaps however is that the second best value phone in the long run was the iPhone 13 Pro, which, at the time of launch, was the second most expensive to buy. Put simply, it has held its value far better than the cheaper models, so it would have cost you less in the long run.

Now, it's nigh-on impossible to predict how well every single phone will hold its value. It's possible that in three years' time, the cheaper brands, such as Xiaomi, Honor and OnePlus phones, will resell for a fairly good price. However, I'd argue it's all but guaranteed that an Apple phone will, and it's also a pretty good bet that you'll be able to get a lot for a Samsung too.

So what's the conclusion? Well – it's that it's not always cheaper to avoid the flagships in the long run. Apple has a reputation for being overpriced, but, it'll be far easier to dispose of it for a better return in a couple of years when you want a new one… if you're looking for a way to save money, it gives you something to think about, doesn't it?

Amy Davies is the Features Editor on AP and is also an expert on smartphone photography and smartphones generally.

Do you have something you'd like to get off your chest? Send us your thoughts in around 500 words to the email address on page 3 and win a year's digital subscription to AP.

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Forge GeForce RTX 5080 PC

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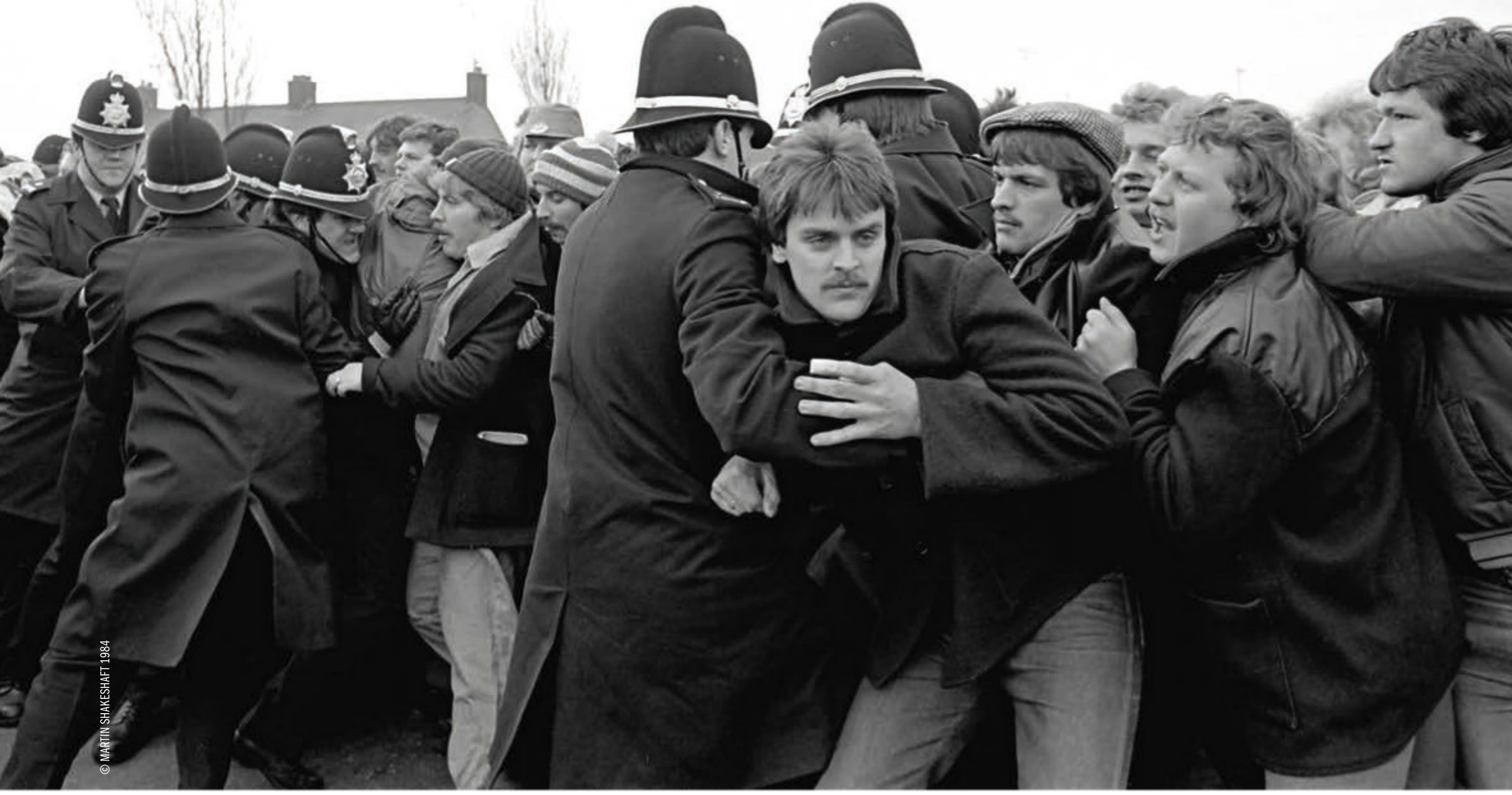

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Streic! 84-85 Strike!

National Museum Cardiff, until 27 April 2025
Pay what you can (suggested donation £10)

It's been more than 40 years since the start of the Miners' Strike. This wide-ranging exhibition looks at the impact it had on communities

In 1984, 22,000 Welsh miners downed their tools and walked out of pits across Wales as part of a nationwide protest against plans to close 20 coal mines across the UK.

Over the 12 long and brutal months of the strike, families and communities were left divided, with families suffering hardship but a sense of unprecedented solidarity too. The mining industry continued to decline.

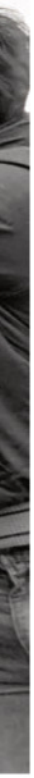
This exhibition attempts to recreate what life was like during that time, exploring the politics, the passions and the protests of all those involved – and not just those directly standing on the picket lines either.

We get a look at what life was like for families celebrating Christmas in 1984, and explore the efforts of the women tasked with creating supplies to keep their families going during a year of hardship.

There's personal photography as well as professional, alongside objects such as handmade protest banners to give a genuine feel of the reality of life during this time.

The work of three photographers are displayed, including Richard Williams, who was working as a press photographer during that time. He says, 'It was an extreme time, with emotions and passions running high, which was very understandable as defeat meant communities would change forever…. I was also there for the end and afterwards as miners returned and most traces of the industry began to disappear.'

Of course, Wales was not the only place to be affected by the miners' strike, and the decisions of those in power which led to the action. This exhibition is probably particularly poignant for anyone with a connection to Wales, but those from other areas who also remember the strike and its lasting impact will likely also find it to be well worth a visit.



Left: © Martin Shakeshaft

Right: © M Thompson / Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

Below, top: © South Wales Argus

Below: © Richard Williams / Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

HONDDA VALLE
NURSES
NU
SOLIDA Y

ABERCERDIN LABOUR PARTY SUPPORT THE MINERS
IF YOU SUFFER WITH "SCABS" PICKET
CO NO DOLE

Books & exhibitions

The latest and best books and exhibitions from the world of photography

© Annie Ernaux & Marc Marie, 2005

The Use of Photography by Annie Ernaux and Marc Marie

£12.99, Fitzcarraldo Editions, softback, 136 pages, ISBN: 9781804271148

This extraordinary book recounts a passionate love affair between Nobel Prize-winning author Annie Ernaux and the journalist and author Marc Marie, after the two met in January 2003.

At the time, Ernaux had been receiving chemotherapy for breast cancer and had lost all of her hair. Shortly after their affair began, she become drawn to photograph the sights of disarray in the different locations where it took place – chairs out of place, clothes strewn about and the remnants of meals still on the table. When she told Marie how she felt, he said he was compelled to do the same.

In the chapters that follow, the two analyse the photographs taking during that period, discuss how death hung over the relationship, how they felt about each other, and eventually the end of their relationship.

It's a moving, intimate and poignant portrayal of a moment in someone's life, where photography plays a crucial role.

The book has been translated from French by Alison L Strayer into English for the first time.

This is perhaps not the usual type of book we'd generally feature on these pages, but it's one of the most intriguing I've come across in a while and comes highly recommended.

It's good to share

Our favourite photos posted by readers on our social media channels this week

AP Picture of the Week

this picture
LOVE IT. FRAME IT

*UK AND IRELAND ONLY

WIN! The AP Pic of the Week winner will receive a beautifully framed print of their winning image worth up to £100. **If you Love it, Frame it!** ThisPicture.com is an experienced, high-quality framing company with a unique, easy-to-use website. Build single or multi-image frames with a few clicks of your mouse and select from a wide range of frames, window mounts and glazing options. Each frame comes with a three-year guarantee and FREE P&P within the UK. Visit **thispicture.co.uk**

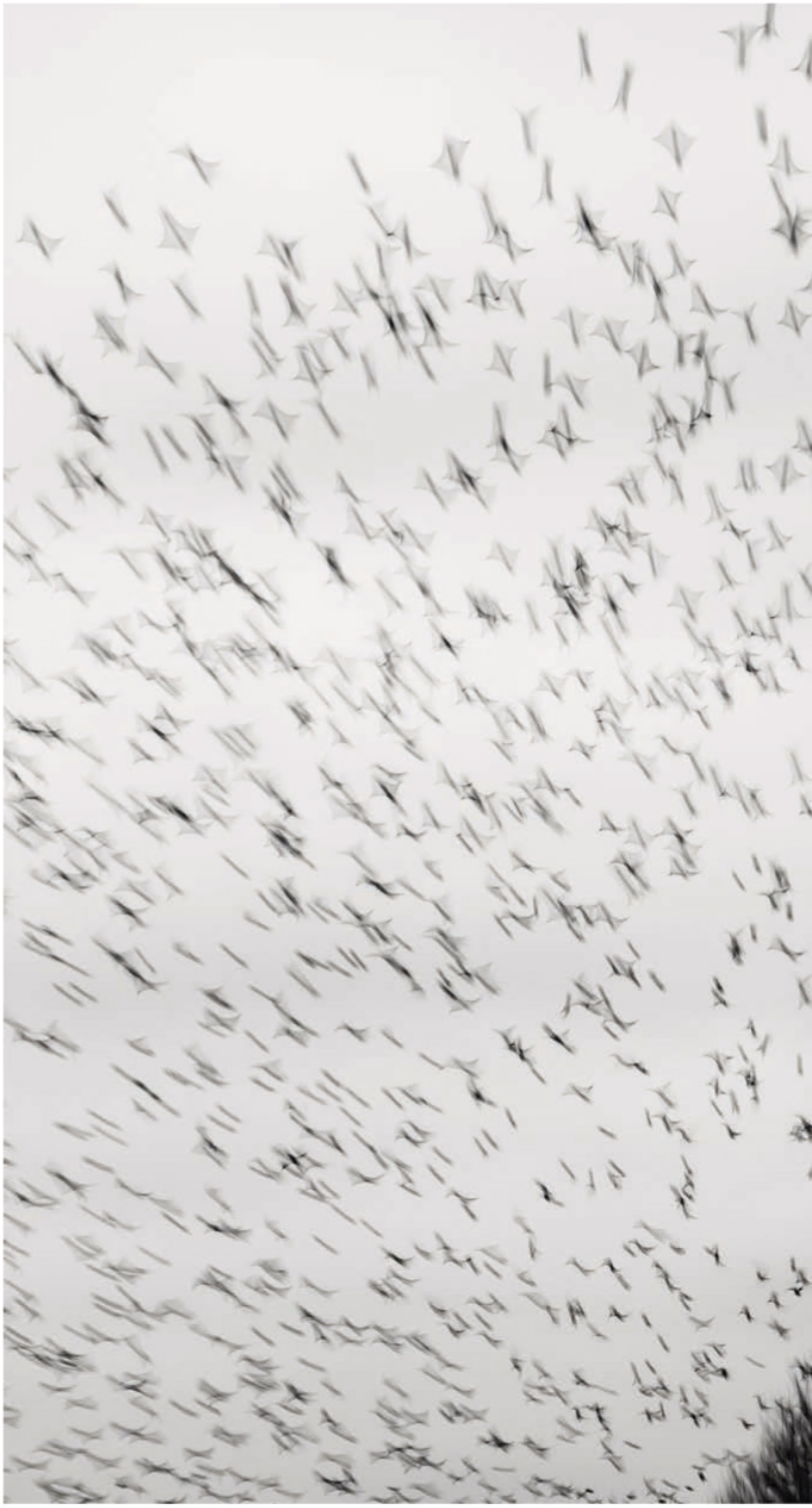
#appicoftheweek

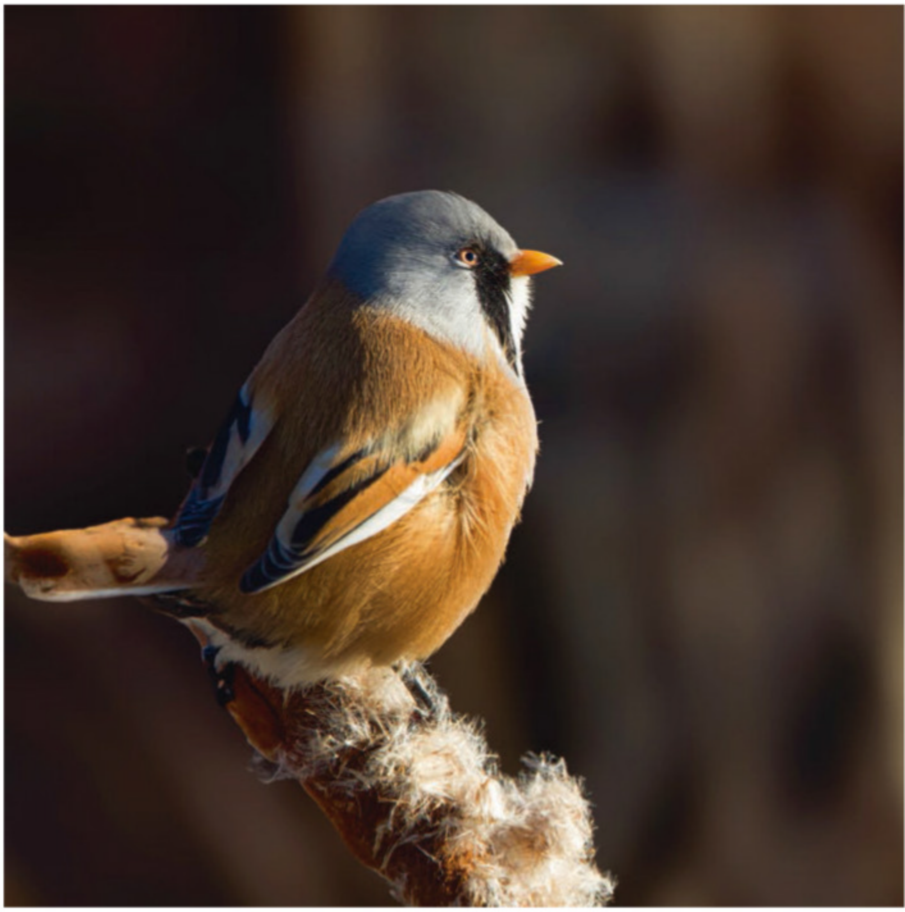
Low Light, Slow Flight
by Sarah Michelle Wyer

Nikon Z7II, Nikon Z 100-400mm VR S, 1/20sec at f/5.6, ISO 640

'By using a slow shutter speed, I was able to achieve a different perspective on a starling murmuration in low-light conditions. I had not tried this method before with starlings and I was very surprised by the results. I think the birds resemble tiny kites soaring through the sky!'

Instagram: @photographybysarah.michelle
Facebook: Sarah Michelle Photography





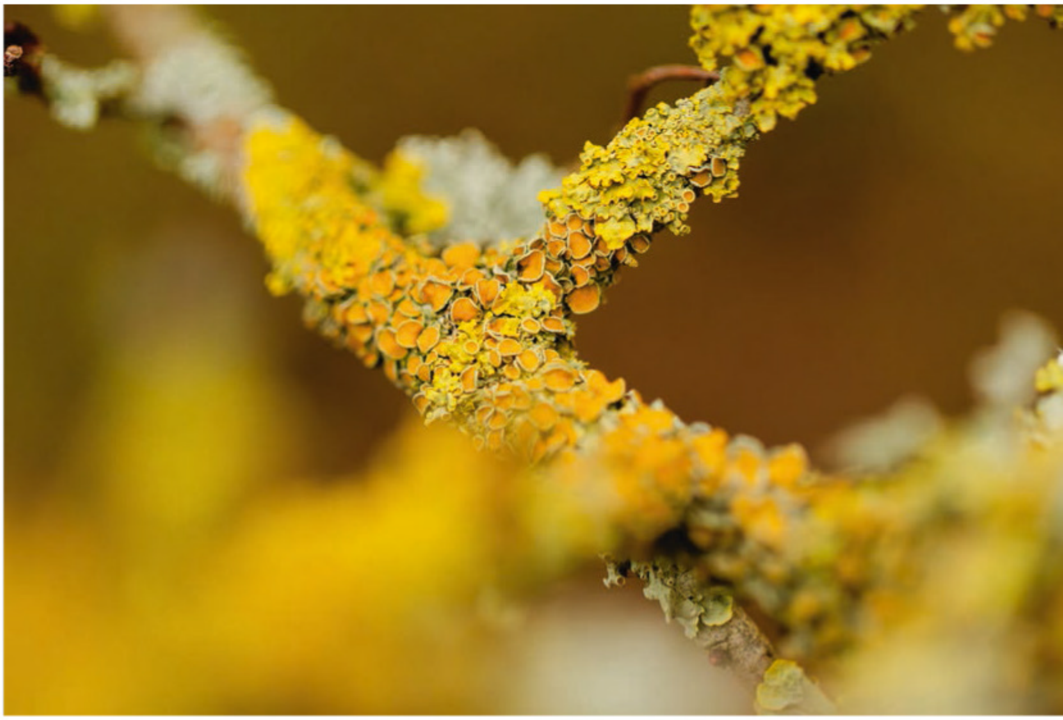
Male Bearded Reedling, Enjoying the Winter Sunshine by Suzanne Sullivan

Canon EOS R7, Canon RF100-500mm at 500mm, 1/1250sec at f/7.1, ISO 800

'I had never seen a bearded reedling before, and was aware that they were being seen regularly at Elmley Nature Reserve, so I embarked on a day trip! Everyone was waiting, with cameras in hand, opposite the beautiful golden reeds, where the birds were regularly seen, but due to vision impairments, I struggled to spot them. So I walked away, and met a local photographer, who kindly showed me where I could hopefully find some close up. I struck lucky and got this beautiful male bearded reedling, backlit in the winter sunshine. He flitted amongst the reeds, showing off his beautiful colours and climbing skills! What an absolute joy to watch him.'

Instagram: @snappysuzi

It's good to share



Lichens
by Chloe Fitton

Canon EOS 4000D, Canon EF 100mm f/2.8L Macro IS USM, 1/400sec at f/2.8, ISO 1250

'Lichens are organisms which provide ecosystems for food, shelter and habitats. The fungus farms algae for food. This is a symbiotic relationship, where they have mutualism. But some scientists think it's actually a controlled form of parasitism.'

Instagram: @photographyistherapy

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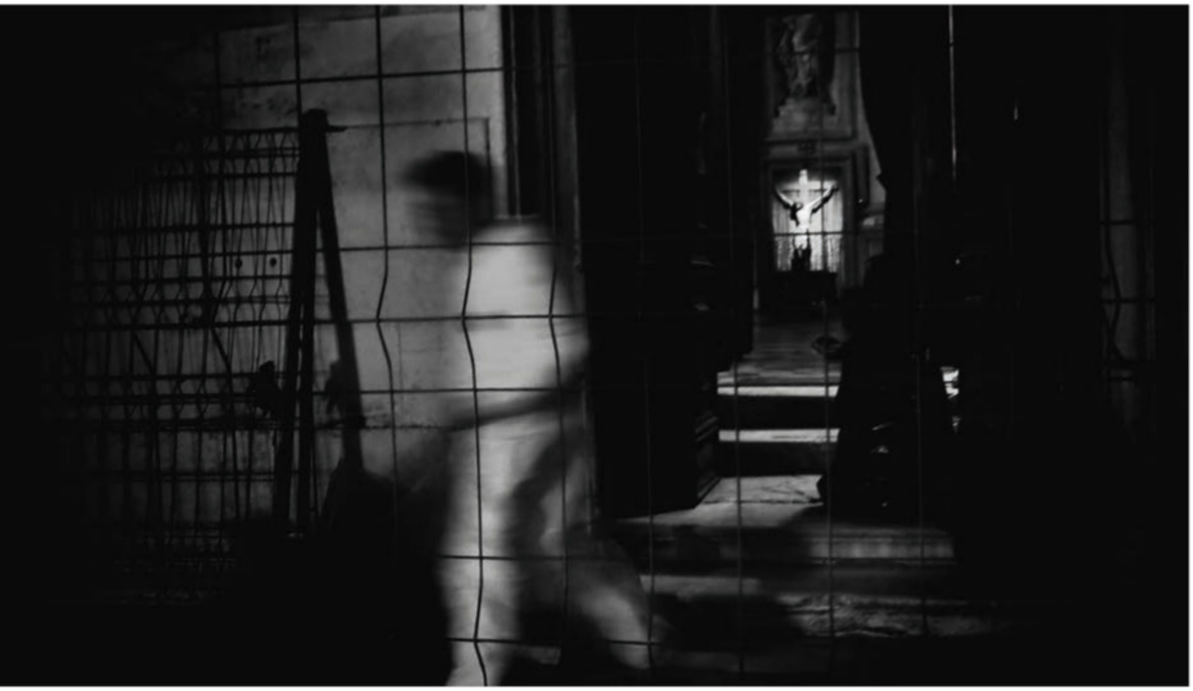

Divinely Mundane
by Eva Sipola

'This photo was a lucky accident taken in Venice a while back. The doors of this church undergoing restoration were open that night and I almost missed the shot when the worker emerged. The mundane activity of the man and the illuminated symbol of things divine created an interesting juxtaposition.'

Instagram: @biankonera

Want to see your pictures here? Simply share them with our Flickr, Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook communities using the hashtag #appicoftheweek. Or you can email your best shot to us at **ap.ed@kelsey.co.uk**. See page 3 for how to find us.

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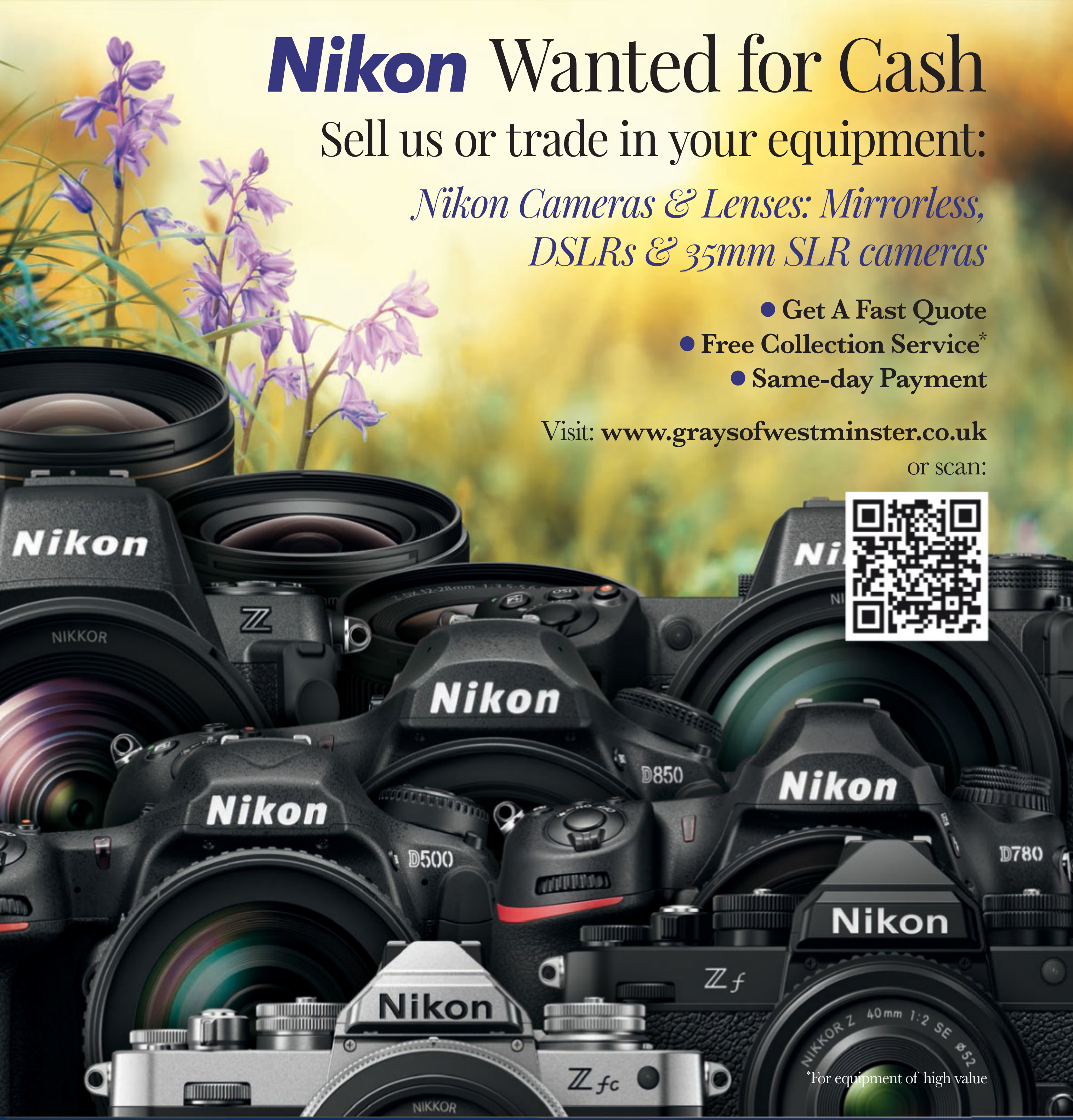
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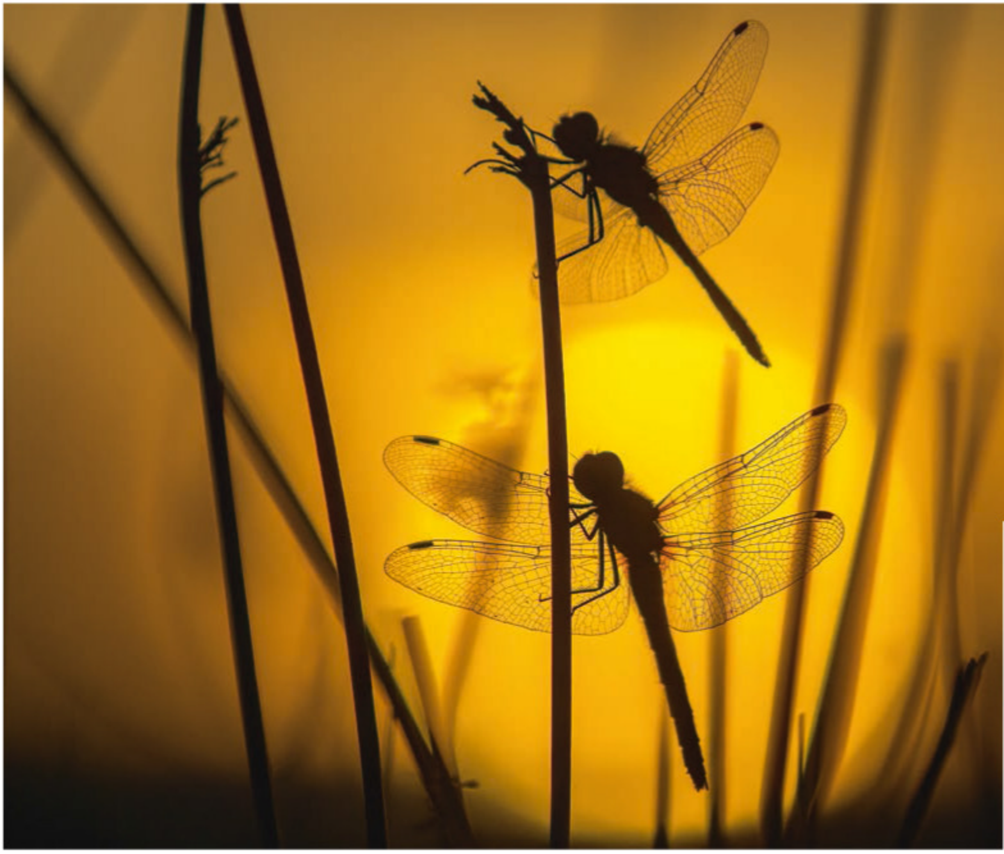


© ANDREW FUSEK PETERS

Getting this image of black darter dragonflies was not easy but it paid off, as *The Guardian* ran it

Pictures of the year

G2 special issue

The Guardian

Charities forced to shut up shop as Brexit hits funding

Ministers accused of failing over PPE fraud

UK wildlife hit in year of weather extremes

Get your pictures published

There's nothing like getting your best images in national newspapers or magazines. Nature pro **Andrew Fusek Peters** reveals how it's done

Andrew Fusek Peters is a wildlife and landscape photographer and OM System Ambassador. His books include *Butterfly Safari* and *Garden Safari*, published this spring. **www.fusekphotos.com**, **@andrewfusekpeters** on Instagram and **@2peters on X/ Twitter/**

As a wildlife and landscape photographer, I have had over 700 photos and features published, including cover shots for *The Times, The Guardian, Daily Mail, BBC Wildlife* and *Country Life* (I regularly appear in AP too!) Over the next few pages, I'm going to share my experience and tips on how to get in the news, what the agencies are looking for, how the money side works but above all what makes a good news story.

Picture agencies are keen for new photos and photographers, which means anyone can get their work out there. But this game has strict gatekeepers. Working out what will pass the agencies' quality test, then what will make the picture editors at the paper go 'wow, that's going in tomorrow's edition' requires hard work, persistence, and a thick skin.

Get to know your gatekeepers

In this industry, the gatekeepers – and your first port of call – are the picture agencies, many of whom are active on social media and always looking for new material. It is the agencies you need to approach with your story. Your pics need to have been taken in the last few days – the papers want current stories. If the agency wants to run with it, they will ring you for a quick interview, then package up the story to send out on the wire. This means it goes to all papers, regardless of political leanings (I don't get to choose). Even if a story is packaged and sent out, your work still has to go through each paper's picture editor who will have many hundreds of pictures to flick through each day.

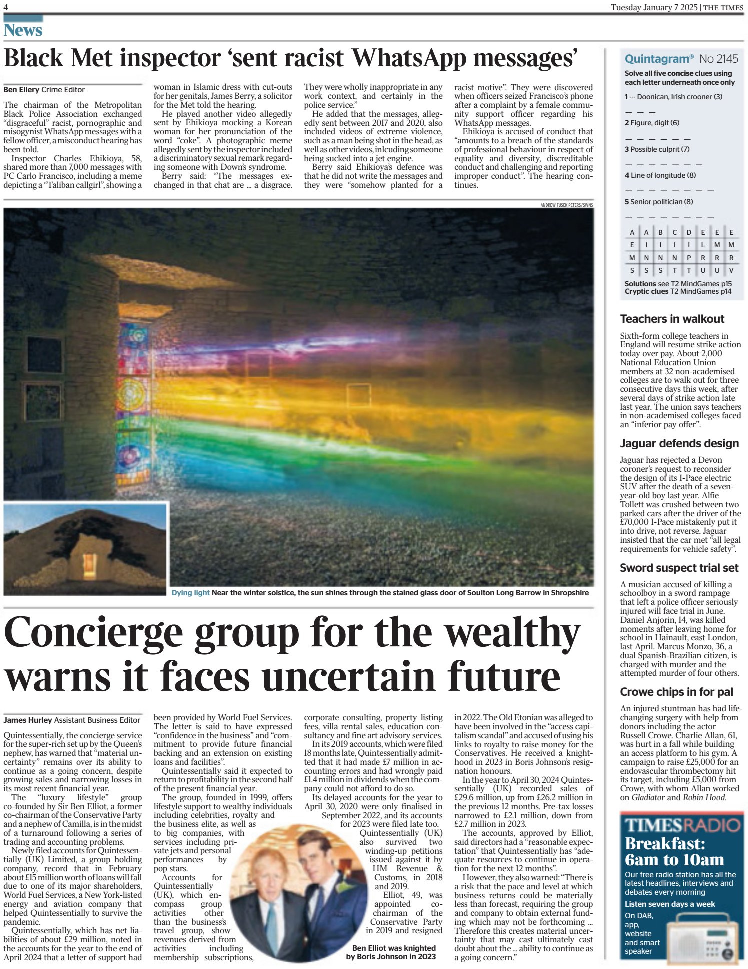
Although most photo slots will be taken up with the big news of the day, every paper has a couple of gaps for wildlife, big weather, aurora, supermoon etc – and those are the slots we freelance photographers aim to fill. If you get through to be finally printed or online, don't expect to pay off your mortgage. Most agencies take 50% and fees paid have dropped hugely, partly because of the declining circulation of newspapers. But they do pay, mainly based on how big the photo is printed; online, despite reaching more readers, pays a lot less.

The big take-home message here is that everything starts with a stunning photo or story. It doesn't matter whether you are pro or amateur, or how many followers you have. Only the work counts. It needs to leap off the screen, to be immediate and spectacular and to instantly impress viewers. Newspapers want visual content so if your story needs a long explanation about what is happening, then generally it won't be used.

Advice from the picture agencies

If you have an amazing set of pics – and picture editors generally prefer a set, so they can choose – you can pitch directly to picture agencies (see contact details at the end). If any agency bites, they will contact you and go through the financial details and set you up in their system. So what kind of pictures are the agencies looking for?

'There are many types of news photo but the ones that work for us are often eye-catching, evocative, or surprising images of things happening right now,' says Jon Mills, SWNS Group Picture Editor. This was amplified by David Keane, of Kennedy News and Media. 'We're always on the lookout for pictures and videos that



4

Tuesday January 7 2025 | THE TIMES

News

Black Met inspector 'sent racist WhatsApp messages'

Ben Ellery Crime Editor

The chairman of the Metropolitan Black Police Association exchanged "disgraceful" racist, pornographic and misogynist WhatsApp messages with a fellow officer, a misconduct hearing has been told.

Inspector Charles Ehikioya, 58, shared more than 7,000 messages with PC Carlo Francisco, including a meme depicting a "Taliban callgirl", showing a woman in Islamic dress with cut-outs for her genitals, James Berry, a solicitor for the Met told the hearing.

He played another video allegedly sent by Ehikioya mocking a Korean woman for her pronunciation of the word "coke". A photographic meme allegedly sent by the inspector included a discriminatory sexual remark regarding someone with Down's syndrome.

Berry said: "The messages exchanged in that chat are … a disgrace. They were wholly inappropriate in any work context, and certainly in the police service."

He added that the messages, allegedly sent between 2017 and 2020, also included videos of extreme violence, such as a man being shot in the head, as well as other videos, inlcuding someone being sucked into a jet engine.

Berry said Ehikioya's defence was that he did not write the messages and they were "somehow planted for a racist motive". They were discovered when officers seized Francisco's phone after a complaint by a female community support officer regarding his WhatsApp messages.

Ehikioya is accused of conduct that "amounts to a breach of the standards of professional behaviour in respect of equality and diversity, discreditable conduct and challenging and reporting improper conduct". The hearing continues.

ANDREW FUSEK PETERS/SWNS

Dying light Near the winter solstice, the sun shines through the stained glass door of Soulton Long Barrow in Shropshire

Concierge group for the wealthy warns it faces uncertain future

James Hurley Assistant Business Editor

Quintessentially, the concierge service for the super-rich set up by the Queen's nephew, has warned that "material uncertainty" remains over its ability to continue as a going concern, despite growing sales and narrowing losses in its most recent financial year.

The "luxury lifestyle" group co-founded by Sir Ben Elliot, a former co-chairman of the Conservative Party and a nephew of Camilla, is in the midst of a turnaround following a series of trading and accounting problems.

Newly filed accounts for Quintessentially (UK) Limited, a group holding company, record that in February about £15 million worth of loans will fall due to one of its major shareholders, World Fuel Services, a New York-listed energy and aviation company that helped Quintessentially to survive the pandemic.

Quintessentially, which has net liabilities of about £29 million, noted in the accounts for the year to the end of April 2024 that a letter of support had been provided by World Fuel Services. The letter is said to have expressed "confidence in the business" and "commitment to provide future financial backing and an extension on existing loans and facilities".

Quintessentially said it expected to return to profitability in the second half of the present financial year.

The group, founded in 1999, offers lifestyle support to wealthy individuals including celebrities, royalty and the business elite, as well as to big companies, with services including private jets and personal performances by pop stars.

Accounts for Quintessentially (UK), which encompass group activities other than the business's travel group, show revenues derived from activities including membership subscriptions, corporate consulting, property listing fees, villa rental sales, education consultancy and fine art advisory services.

In its 2019 accounts, which were filed 18 months late, Quintessentially admitted that it had made £7 million in accounting errors and had wrongly paid £1.4 million in dividends when the company could not afford to do so.

Its delayed accounts for the year to April 30, 2020 were only finalised in September 2022, and its accounts for 2023 were filed late too.

Quintessentially (UK) also survived two winding-up petitions issued against it by HM Revenue & Customs, in 2018 and 2019.

Elliot, 49, was appointed co-chairman of the Conservative Party in 2019 and resigned in 2022. The Old Etonian was alleged to have been involved in the "access capitalism scandal" and accused of using his links to royalty to raise money for the Conservatives. He received a knighthood in 2023 in Boris Johnson's resignation honours.

In the year to April 30, 2024 Quintessentially (UK) recorded sales of £29.6 million, up from £26.2 million in the previous 12 months. Pre-tax losses narrowed to £2.1 million, down from £2.7 million in 2023.

The accounts, approved by Elliot, said directors had a "reasonable expectation" that Quintessentially has "adequate resources to continue in operation for the next 12 months".

However, they also warned: "There is a risk that the pace and level at which business returns could be materially less than forecast, requiring the group and company to obtain external funding which may not be forthcoming … Therefore this creates material uncertainty that may cast ultimately cast doubt about the … ability to continue as a going concern."

Ben Elliot was knighted by Boris Johnson in 2023

Quintagram® No 2145

Solve all five concise clues using each letter underneath once only

1 --- Doonican, Irish crooner (3)

_ _ _

2 Figure, digit (6)

_ _ _ _ _ _

3 Possible culprit (7)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _

4 Line of longitude (8)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

5 Senior politician (8)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

A	A	B	C	D	E	E	E
E	I	I	I	I	L	M	M
M	N	N	N	P	R	R	R
S	S	S	T	T	U	U	V

Solutions see T2 MindGames p15
Cryptic clues T2 MindGames p14

Teachers in walkout

Sixth-form college teachers in England will resume strike action today over pay. About 2,000 National Education Union members at 32 non-academised colleges are to walk out for three consecutive days this week, after several days of strike action late last year. The union says teachers in non-academised colleges faced an "inferior pay offer".

Jaguar defends design

Jaguar has rejected a Devon coroner's request to reconsider the design of its I-Pace electric SUV after the death of a seven-year-old boy last year. Alfie Tollett was crushed between two parked cars after the driver of the £70,000 I-Pace mistakenly put it into drive, not reverse. Jaguar insisted that the car met "all legal requirements for vehicle safety".

Sword suspect trial set

A musician accused of killing a schoolboy in a sword rampage that left a police officer seriously injured will face trial in June. Daniel Anjorin, 14, was killed moments after leaving home for school in Hainault, east London, last April. Marcus Monzo, 36, a dual Spanish-Brazilian citizen, is charged with murder and the attempted murder of four others.

Crowe chips in for pal

An injured stuntman has had life-changing surgery with help from donors including the actor Russell Crowe. Charlie Allan, 61, was hurt in a fall while building an access platform to his gym. A campaign to raise £25,000 for an endovascular thrombectomy hit its target, including £5,000 from Crowe, with whom Allan worked on *Gladiator* and *Robin Hood*.

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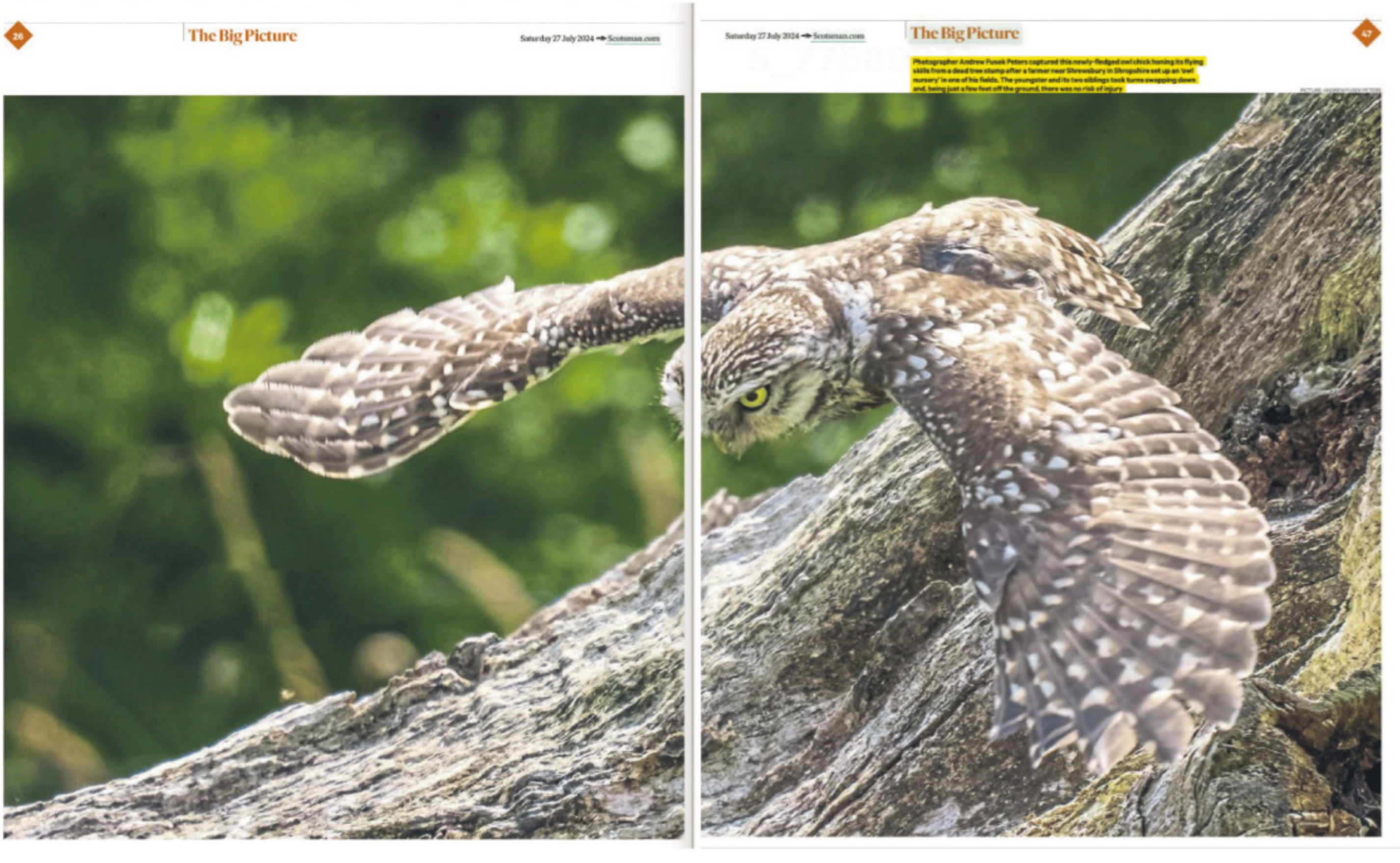
Left: It's not just wildlife that sells, but building shots, for example, need to be unique and spectacular

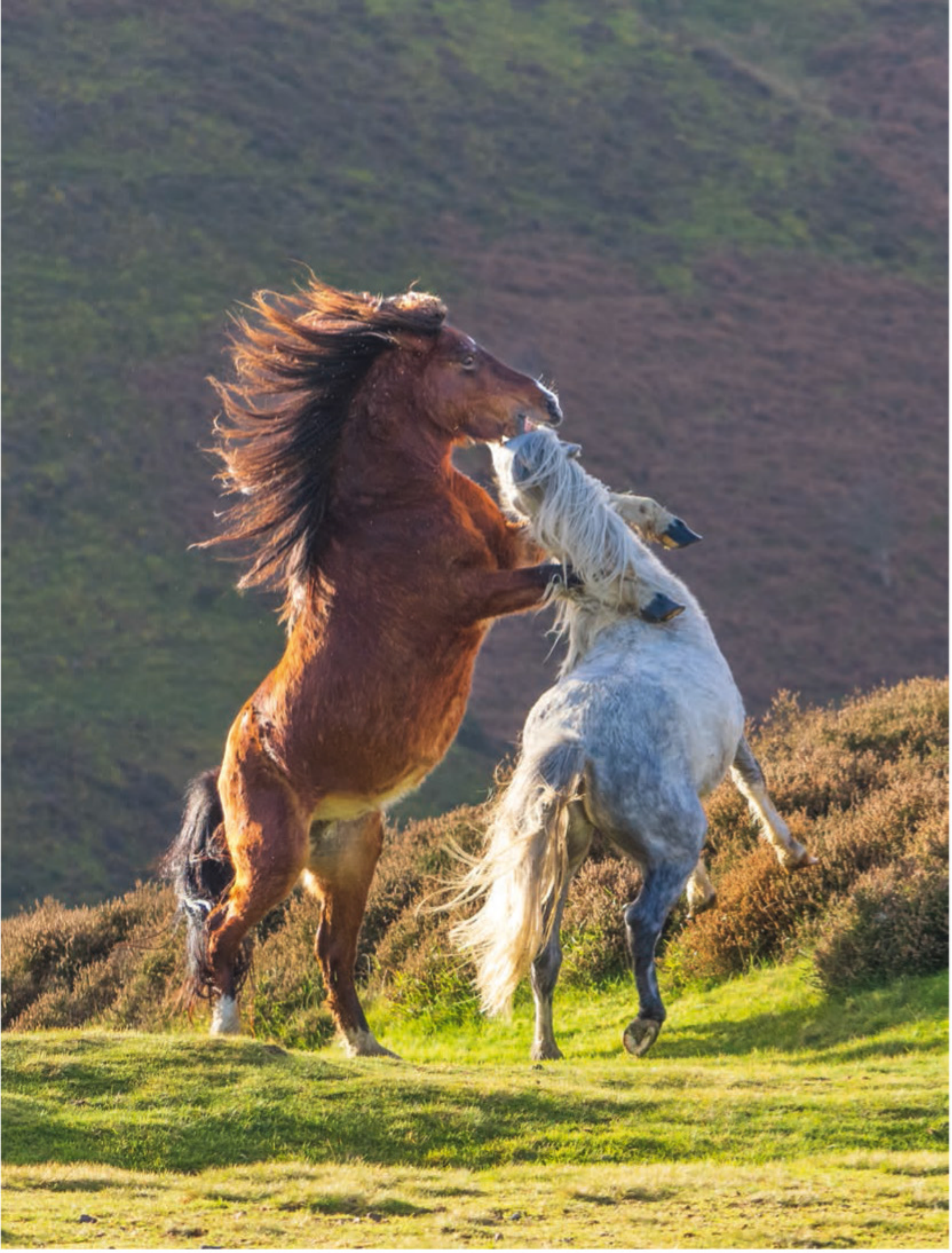


26 The Big Picture Saturday 27 July 2024 → Scotsman.com

Saturday 27 July 2024 → Scotsman.com The Big Picture 47

Photographer Andrew Fusek Peters captured this newly-fledged owl chick honing its flying skills from a dead tree stump after a farmer near Shrewsbury in Shropshire set up an 'owl nursery' in one of his fields. The youngster and its two siblings took turns swooping down and, being just a few feet off the ground, there was no risk of injury

Below: Think how newspapers lay out images when you are out shooting – using landscape format will help



© ANDREW FUSEK PETERS

captivate an audience, grab the attention, or put a smile on people's faces – from awe-inspiring moments to quirky and unusual things caught on camera. Anything weird and wonderful or gets people talking.'

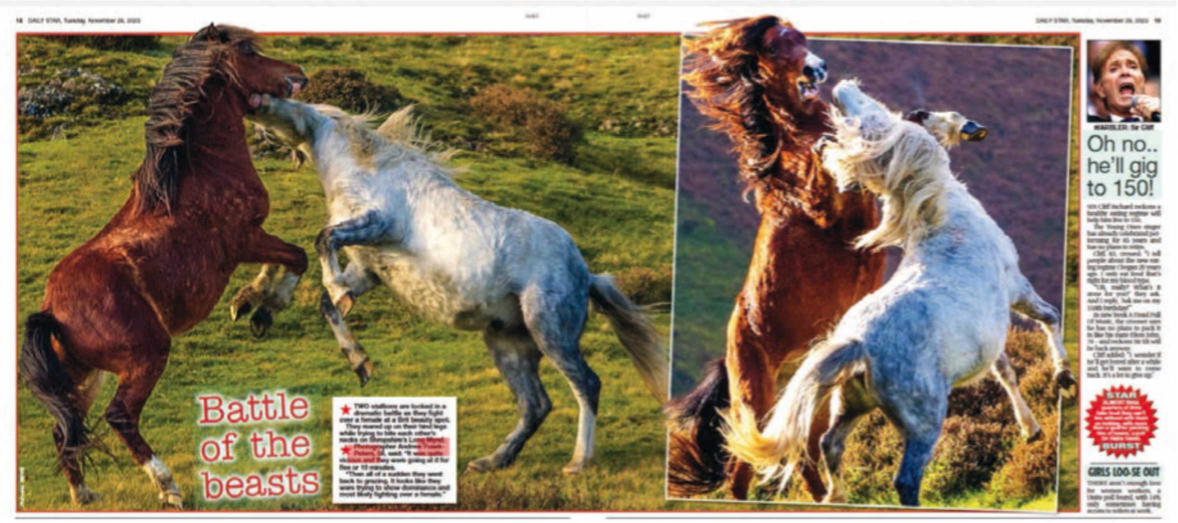
Rick Findler, from Story Picture Agency, is more specific. 'We are always looking for pictures which can fill a newspaper. The British papers love a colourful wildlife picture, a beautiful sunrise or anything showing the extreme weather we often get. We encourage talented photographers to send us their pictures which we can sell on their behalf to the newspapers and get them published.'

When the magic happens

Okay, so you've got through all the hoops and an agency has sent off your story. What next? Mostly disappointment. But if the photographic gods are smiling, you might get a hit. The feeling of landing one of your images in a national paper is unbeatable. Like placing in a competition, a result says something about what you have achieved, and you become part of a national conversation. Yes, the papers are dwindling and yes AI is a threat, but this sort of work still counts and is a notch in your belt. It can enable you to approach magazines, organisations and camera brands you want to work with and acts as a persuasive calling card.

Some of my most successful pictures , and why

1. On my way up to the top of the Long Mynd in Shropshire for snow

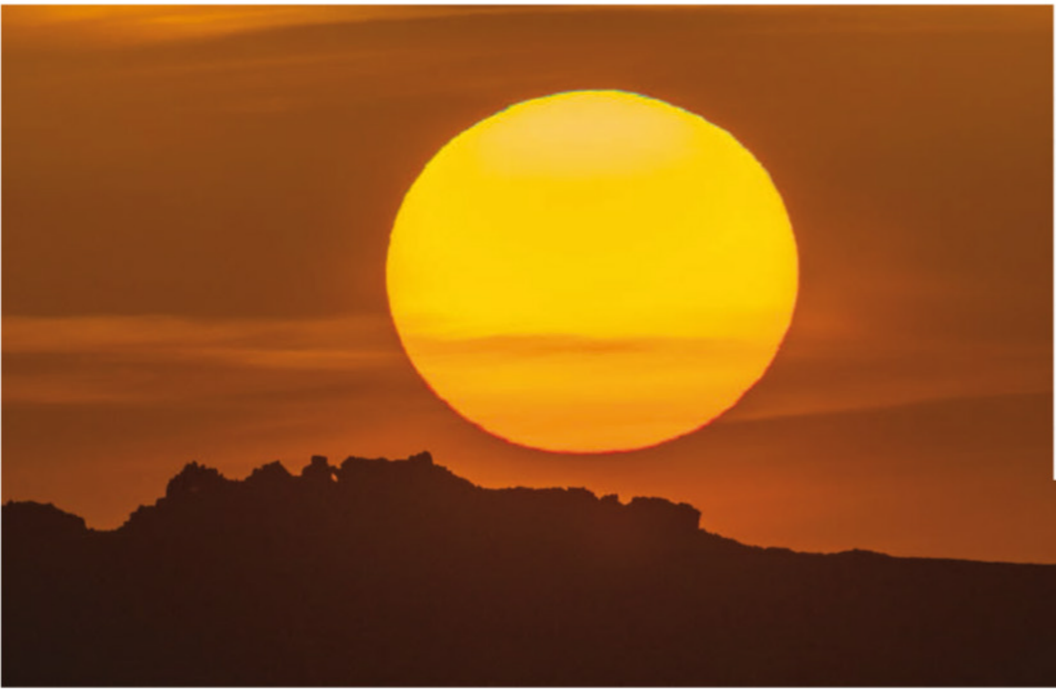


Battle of the beasts

Oh no.. he'll gig to 150!

GIRLS LOO-SE OUT

The *Daily Star* might be better known for its comedy front pages, but it also regularly buys my images!



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Bright spot: sunniest spring ever

The sun rising over the Devil's Chair in Shropshire also required lots of planning, but again, the effort was well worth it

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bunting, I suddenly saw two male stallions fighting for dominance (opposite page). This was a first for me. The series of shots caught the moment and my agency thought it would sell big. Next morning it made six national papers, including a two-page spread in *Daily Star* (a paper that surprisingly uses a lot of wildlife images).

2. The dream of any photographer is to get a cover shot and this is where the word 'spectacular' really needs to apply. I am fascinated by using long lenses to capture sunset/moon rise but in the context of interesting landscape or built foregrounds. This type of shot requires planning and perfect weather and is difficult to pull off. I was on the Long Mynd, a few miles from the Stiperstone Ridge and in the right spot for the sun to set directly over a rock formation called the Devil's Chair. My Olympus OM-D E-M1 Mark III and 300mm f/4 lens with 2x extender made the sun fill the frame, and the image stabilisation gave me a rock-steady set of shots, one of which made the cover of the Saturday edition of *The Times*.

3. I became fascinated by the huge challenge of capturing butterflies in flight and close-up. The results were rarely seen before and the papers lapped it up. It was directly due to my success that a publisher approached me to do a book on UK butterflies. When *Butterfly Safari* came out, papers and magazines opened their doors.

BBC wildlife

MAY

BASKING IN GLORY

A spectacular showcase of British butterflies

10 UK sites to enjoy wildlife and history

The rise of eco-anxiety

Restoring the black-tailed godwit

Trinidad's turtle beach

My butterfly images really took off

Embrace the challenge

There is no 'golden key' to success in getting your work picked up by the papers. But taking on this challenge can be great for your photography. Push yourself to think about landscape and wildlife, and work out what is original and has not been done before. This can only advance your practice, as can repeatedly doing something until you're finally happy with an unexpected result that might help you to move your career or the passion of your hobby forward. Good luck!

What I use, and why

My main camera is an OM-1 Mark II, which has given me several advantages. The lighter weight compared to full frame means that I am more likely to take it out for long days in the field. Many of my bird and butterfly in flight and fight shots that have been published were achieved using the excellent Pro Capture which can now buffer up to 120fps before fully pressing the shutter. When the action kicks off, I rarely miss the moment. Also for the sun and moon shots, the reach of telephotos with extenders is extraordinary and has helped me to make shots that appear almost unreal. Delivering the kind of quirky, arresting and spectacular images that agencies want is made much easier.

10 ways to capture shots that sell

1 Work hard. If you are working on a wildlife species, put in the time, study their behaviour, work out your goal – for instance I have spent the last ten winters on garden birds with my goal of both perfect flight and fight shots. Eventually a species will do something unexpected or interesting.

2 The same holds for shots of big moon, sunset or sunrise or aurora with fantastic foreground – i.e. mountains, natural formations, castles, urban and so on. Use apps such as The Photographer's Ephemeris 3D to plan your shot. Most of the time clouds will give you a no-show – this is where going back again and again will pay off.

3 As with the above, your aim is to showcase something that has never been done before. When I started work on moonrise over the Caer Caradoc and the volcanic formation Three Fingers Rock, I was the first person to achieve these images – which made five newspapers including the cover of *The Times*.

4 The opposite also applies – not only do the papers like something fresh, they also love a classic shot with a well-known landmark – such as moonrise over Glastonbury Tor, or behind the Statue of Liberty or aurora over Stonehenge. It might have been done a thousand times, but if you do it well, you are in with a chance.

5 Most lucky moments happen by putting in the hours but once in a while, if you are out with your camera or even smartphone, incredible action might kick off in front of your eyes. It's your job then to react fast, grab the shots you can and hope for a miracle – remember the weasel on the back of a flying green woodpecker – the shot was not even in perfect focus, but it was a one-in-a-billion capture that was published worldwide.

6 Pump up the edit! I hate over-processed photos but remember that the papers are looking for bright and colourful images and that they are printing at low resolution on relatively low-quality paper, so your image needs to stand out. A touch more vibrance, contrast and clarity can work wonders.

7 Test your photos on social media. I am often my own worst critic, but sometimes I put an image that I don't really rate on social media feeds and get a warm, personal response – this gives me the confidence to send to the agencies.

8 Give the odd freebie. This is a hard one. I believe photographers should always be paid for their work but there are exceptions. When I got my first rainbow-wing diffraction shots, media from around the world contacted me. The resulting news shots were paid for but huge websites like PetaPixel and BBC News got the story for free. This for me was a trade-off. My story hit the main BBC News and got 276,000 views on Instagram, which gave me huge reach and opened doors. The place to start with local stories is your local paper, and in my case *BBC Midlands Today*. It is definitely worth forging relationships with local media to raise your profile.

9 This carries on into social media. Many organisations such as the RSPB or your local Wildlife Trusts will have pages that need constant new work, and forging relationships with them can raise your profile – they are often open to direct messages, and this can be a step forward.

10 Finally. Don't give up. About one in ten of my stories get through, but if I did not send those ten stories, I would not have got picked up at all. If your work is rejected, it might be nothing to do with the quality – it could be a big news day with events taking over all the photo slots, or it could be that some other story made the grade. Failure only happens if you don't keep trying.

Survivor's birds of paradise

By Bradley Stokes

Laser peril for crew of helicopter

By Lucinda Cameron

King's woe at 'cornie' speeches

By Sam Russell

THE TIMES

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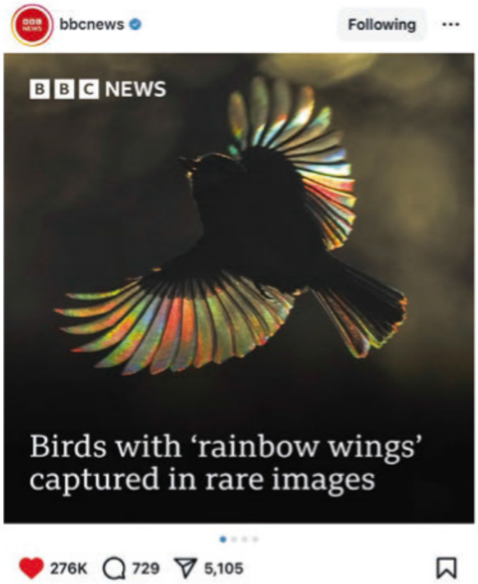

bbcnews

Following

BBC NEWS

Birds with 'rainbow wings' captured in rare images

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Useful contacts

- Jon Mills SWNS Group Picture Editor – pix@swns.com
- Rick Findler – www.storypictureagency.com
- David Keane – news@kennedynews.co.uk

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There's plenty of detail produced by the X-M5's sensor
Fujifilm X-M5, 70-300mm at 258mm, 1/480sec at f/5.6, ISO 800

Fujifilm X-M5

Amy Davies finds out if the small yet powerful Fujifilm X-M5 delivers the goods for both stills and video shooters

Fujifilm's latest compact, lightweight entry-level camera in its APS-C format X-system, the Fujifilm X-M5, was announced in October 2024. The firm says it's aimed at 'everyday storytellers' who are stepping up from a smartphone for the first time, and like to record both still images and video equally. At £799 body-only, or £899 with the XC 15-45mm F3.5-5.6 kit zoom, it's one of the most affordable Fujifilm cameras, alongside the older SLR-style X-T30 II.

Design-wise, the X-M5 is a fairly simple camera, with a small, box-shaped body, no viewfinder, and a fully articulating screen. Fujifilm first used this body style with the original X-M1 back in 2013. There haven't been any other X-M models in between, but instead a range of similarly styled X-A models up to the X-A7 of 2019. Like the X-M1, the X-M5 employs Fujifilm's proprietary X-Trans CMOS sensor, in contrast to the X-A cameras that used conventional Bayer-type sensors.

Unlike the superficially similar Sony ZV-E10 II, or the full-frame Panasonic Lumix S9, the X-M5 is not designed mainly as a vlogging camera. Instead it has a good set of photography features and controls, including a mechanical shutter. In this respect it's more like the Nikon Z30 and Olympus PEN E-P7.

Photo features

While Fujifilm's other recent models have used 40MP sensors, the X-M5 is built around a 26.1MP sensor. However, it boasts the firm's latest X-Processor 5, which means that it shares a lot of its siblings' latest features, including subject-detection autofocus and a full set of Film Simulation modes.

This sensor and processor combination is also employed by the Fujifilm X-S20, which sits above the X-M5 in the firm's line of 'hybrid' models. So we can expect the X-M5 to deliver pretty much identical performance and image quality to the X-S20 – which means very good indeed.

In terms of photographic specifications, the X-M5 naturally has a lot in common with the X-S20, such as the same ISO range and shutter speeds.

Continuous shooting is

›

Data file

Sensor	26.1MP X-Trans 4, 23.5x15.6mm
Output size	6240x4160
Focal length mag	1.5x
Lens mount	Fujifilm X
Shutter speeds	30sec – 1/4000sec (mechanical), 30sec – 1/32000sec (electronic)
Sensitivity	ISO 125-12,800 (standard), ISO 25,600 (extended)
Exposure modes	PASM, Auto, video, vlog, creative filter
Metering	Multi-spot, centre-weighted, average
Exposure comp	+/-5EV in 0.3EV steps
Continuous shooting	8fps (mechanical), 20fps (electronic), 30fps (1.25x crop)
Screen	3in, 1.04m-dot fully articulated touchscreen
AF points	117 or 425
Video	6.2K 3:2 30fps; 4K 60fps; Full HD 120fps; up to 200Mbps
External mic	3.5mm stereo
Memory card	UHS-I SD
Power	NP-W126S rechargeable Li-ion
Battery life	330 shots; 440 shots in Eco mode
Dimensions	111.9x66.6x38mm
Weight	355g

Focal points

Fujifilm has used a compact body design with an articulated screen, but no electronic viewfinder

Film Simulation dial

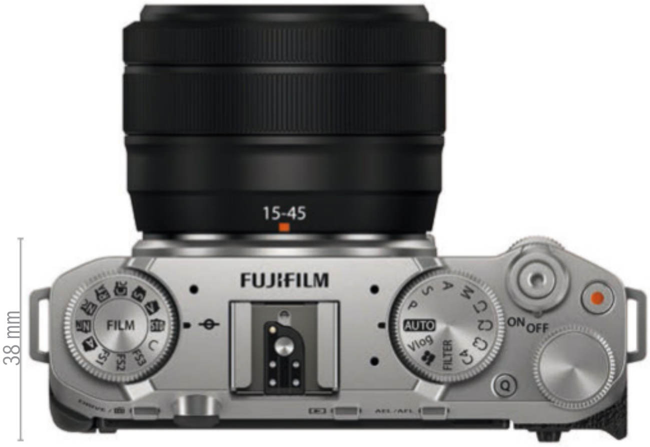
There's a new Film Simulation dial which sits on the top left of the body. Some will like this, but others would prefer an unmarked dial that could be used for other purposes.

Screen

At 1.04m-dots, this is on the lower end of Fujifilm's specifications for screens. It fully articulates, making it useful for shooting pieces to camera.

Joystick

Use this small joystick to move the focus area and change onscreen settings.



15-45mm lens

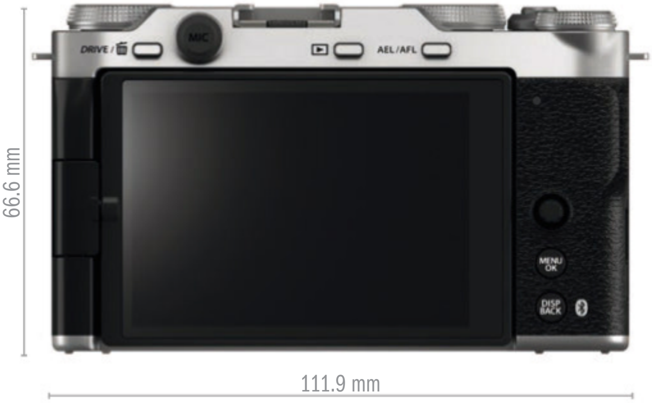
The 22.5-67.5mm equivalent kit zoom is ideally sized for a walkaround lens. However, although it's compatible with any X series lens, the camera's small size means you need to be mindful of what else you pair it with.

Stylish looks

The silver and black incarnation is particularly attractive, but you can also opt for an all-black version if you'd prefer to be discreet, perhaps.

Q button

Tap the Q button at the top to quickly move between key favoured settings, using it in conjunction with the joystick on the back of the camera.



available at up to 8 frames per second using the mechanical shutter, 20fps with the electronic shutter, and 30fps with the electronic shutter and a 1.25x crop.

Subject detection covers animals, birds, cars, motorcycles and bikes, airplanes, and trains. As usual for Fujifilm, human face/eye detection is also available, as a separate but mutually exclusive option.

There's no in-body image stabilisation, so the camera relies on in-lens optical stabilisation for stills, which is complemented by electronic stabilisation for video.

Video features

Video features are impressive for the price, with the X-M5 capable of 6.2K 30p 'open gate' recording, which uses all the sensor pixels for cropping to different aspect ratios in post-production. The camera can also record in 4K at up to 60fps, or Full HD up to 240fps. Uniquely, there's also an option to record vertical Full HD video while holding the camera horizontally.

While many of the X-M5's video modes use the full sensor width, chances are you'll want to enable digital stabilisation, which imposes a 1.32x crop. This will take the 15-45mm kit zoom from 23mm equivalent at the wideangle end to 30mm.

In terms of recording times, the camera should keep going for up to an hour at 25°C and is compatible with Fujifilm's add-on fan unit for extended durations at higher ambient temperatures.

One notable new feature is the addition of a third capsule to the built-in microphone. This allows the recorded sound to be weighted in various different ways: front priority, back priority, front-and-back priority, and full surround. Fujifilm says it has also improved the wind filter, and added a new option for suppressing continuous background noise such as air conditioning.

One nice touch is the inclusion of a headphone socket for monitoring audio, which is inexplicably missing from similarly shaped cameras. It's also on the handgrip, along with the USB-C and HDMI ports, where it won't interfere with the screen. A mic socket is found on the back.

Build and handling

Fujifilm has made good use of the limited body space to offer a decent set of controls.

Shooting at high ISOs in low light can still yield good results
Fujifilm X-M5, 15-45mm at 15mm, 1/70sec at f/3.5, ISO 12,800

A range of different Film Simulations are available, including this one – Classic Chrome
Fujifilm X-M5, 15-45mm at 15mm, 1/160sec at f/11, ISO 160

A front dial can be clicked inwards, which provides quick access to ISO setting. I found this to be a little challenging to get used to, at least at first. I managed to accidentally change the ISO when I didn't want to, on a number of occasions. With time you do get used to the placement and train yourself to avoid it, but it's something to think about when first using the camera and perhaps something for those with larger hands to consider, too.

As well as the bundled kit lens, I also used the XF23mm F1.4 R LM WR lens with it, a prime lens that gives you a 35mm equivalent view. This was just about acceptable paired with the X-M5, albeit a little bit front heavy. For a similar focal length, the XF27mm F2.8 R WR lens would be a good option for keeping things as small as possible, although of course you don't get that lovely large aperture.

Just to see what it was like, I also used the XF70-300mm F4-5.6 R LM OIS WR lens for wildlife shots. This was pretty cumbersome, but, if perhaps it's something you only do occasionally, it wasn't too awful. If you're likely to find yourself shooting with long lenses very regularly, I really wouldn't recommend the X-M5 as the right camera for you, but it's good to try it out nonetheless.

The screen fully articulates, rather than tilts, so you can film pieces to camera, and it is touch sensitive so you can do things like change the focus point by simply tapping where you want it to be within the frame.

Video users should also be pleased that the articulation hinge of the X-M5's screen isn't impeded by any cables that you may have plugged in, such as for an external recorder – it's on the opposite side of the body.

With its small, unobtrusive size, the X-M5 could arguably be a good idea for street photography. However, for this I'd personally prefer a tilting screen where you could hold the camera at waist level and still get a good idea of what you're shooting. It becomes a little more obvious what you're doing when the screen is pulled out to the side.

The lack of a viewfinder is going to be off-putting to some, and irrelevant to others. If you're used to shooting with a smartphone, and have perhaps never even used a viewfinder, you might not be bothered at all. Similarly, if you're mainly shooting video, then a viewfinder (or lack thereof) simply won't be an issue. Personally, I struggle to fully get on board with using the screen only, and in bright light it can be a little annoying trying to angle it away from glare. But that's exactly why Fujifilm makes other models in the range that you can opt for instead if you prefer.

Autofocus

I didn't try the X-M5 with every autofocus subject listed in the specs, but I found that it works very well for animals and birds, doing pretty well to keep up with – admittedly reasonably placid – birds flying and swimming around my local lake.

For humans, it also did very well, locking onto the eyes for portraits with great effect almost all of the time. If you have a particularly erratic subject – such as a small child – and you're shooting in lower light, you might find the kit lens doesn't cope as well as some of the higher-end lenses. But that would be a challenging test for even the best of cameras.

With other general shooting scenarios, such as landscapes and architecture, I found that the X-M5 locked on well most of the time, too.

Performance

As the sensor and processor in the X-M5 is exactly the same as that which is found in the X-S20, I knew that the image quality would be excellent. Essentially, whether you're interested in buying this camera comes down to how you use it, not whether or not the image

Eye-detect autofocus is useful for erratic humans
Fujifilm X-M5, XF 23mm F1.4 R LM WR, 1/100sec at f/1.4, ISO 4000

quality is any good – as that's already a given.

Per Fujifilm's usual output, the JPEG images are wonderful, with excellent colours that are consistent. Here is where your film simulation modes will be added, too. I like to shoot in raw format as well so that I can go back to a 'standard' look if I prefer, but I know some people who are so pleased with Fujifilm's JPEGs that they don't even bother to hedge their bets.

Similarly, exposures are well balanced in the majority of situations, and I rarely felt the need to dial in some exposure compensation when shooting in my favourite mode (aperture priority).

For and against

- ✚ Small and lightweight
- ✚ Fully articulating touchscreen
- ✚ 6.2K/4K video
- ✚ Relatively low price
- ✚ Stylish looks
- ✚ Lots of compatible lenses
- ✚ Excellent film simulations
- ✚ Articulating screen useful for all angles
- ▬ No viewfinder
- ▬ Awkward with bigger lenses
- ▬ Some handling quirks take time to get used to
- ▬ Film simulation dial may feel redundant to some

Shooting in low light yields some very good results too. You get nice and clean images up to ISO 640, and while noise is visible at ISO 3200, it's not displeasing at this point. At ISO 12,800 it's a bit more apparent again, but for sharing or printing at small sizes it's not obtrusive.

I accidentally switched to ISO 51,200 on a couple of occasions when photographing my daughter at home. This is not an ISO speed I'd recommend, but even the grain in these isn't totally offensive – so long as you accept them for what they are.

One thing to think about here is that the X-M5 doesn't offer in-body image stabilisation, whereas the X-S20 does. That's fair enough at this price point, but it may mean at times you need to boost the ISO. Again, if shooting in low light is your thing, this probably isn't quite the camera for you.

Value for money

You can buy the X-M5 for less than £800 body only, or less than £900 if you also want it bundled with the 15-45mm lens, making it one of the most affordable Fujifilm cameras you can buy. If you're keen to get into the Fujifilm ecosystem, it's a good place to start for that reason – but you should think about exactly what you intend to do with the camera.

For those who want a hybrid model, do a lot of video shooting, or perhaps just aren't bothered by viewfinders, it's a good shout. However, if you lean more towards photography, then you can get the older Fujifilm X-T30 II for around the same price.

Both have the same sensor, but the X-M5 has a newer processor, giving better autofocusing, and also better video specs, such as improved 6K recording. You also get other benefits with the newer model, such as new film simulation modes. The body is also smaller and lighter, but that may not necessarily be a good thing if you miss having a viewfinder.

Looking outside of Fujifilm, there's the recently announced Nikon Z50II (£849 body-only, or £999 with 16-50mm lens). Not only is this more expensive, but there are very few APS-C lenses available for Nikon Z mount. Not to mention, the Fujifilm X-M5 is certainly a lot more aesthetically pleasing. AP

Verdict

X-M5
Amateur Photographer
Testbench
Recommended
★★★★½

THE FUJIFILM X-M5 is a lovely little camera, and is capable of producing excellent results.

I'm not particularly in favour of viewfinder-less cameras, but, of those of its kind, this is probably my favourite.

Others will be far less bothered by the lack of a viewfinder, and it's that consumer that this model is aimed at. Those who are perhaps coming over from a smartphone, for example, or those who are true hybrid shooters and are equally at home shooting video.

For a sub-£800 camera, body-only, it's very impressive. To have pretty much the same image quality as the excellent X-S20, as well as some advanced specifications such as subject-detection autofocus, is a clear winner.

The small size of the camera is a good thing on the whole, but there are some compromises to consider. The button layout can at times lead to accidental settings changes, and if you ever want to use larger lenses, it'll probably feel a bit awkward. For now at least, the SLR-style X-T30 II remains on sale, and it's currently about the same price. If I were buying, that would probably be the one I'd go for. But if you're not worried about that kind of shooting experience, the X-M5 is a great choice.

FEATURES	9/10
BUILD & HANDLING	8/10
METERING	9/10
AUTOFOCUS	8/10
AWB & COLOUR	9/10
DYNAMIC RANGE	9/10
IMAGE QUALITY	9/10
VIEWFINDER/LCD	7/10

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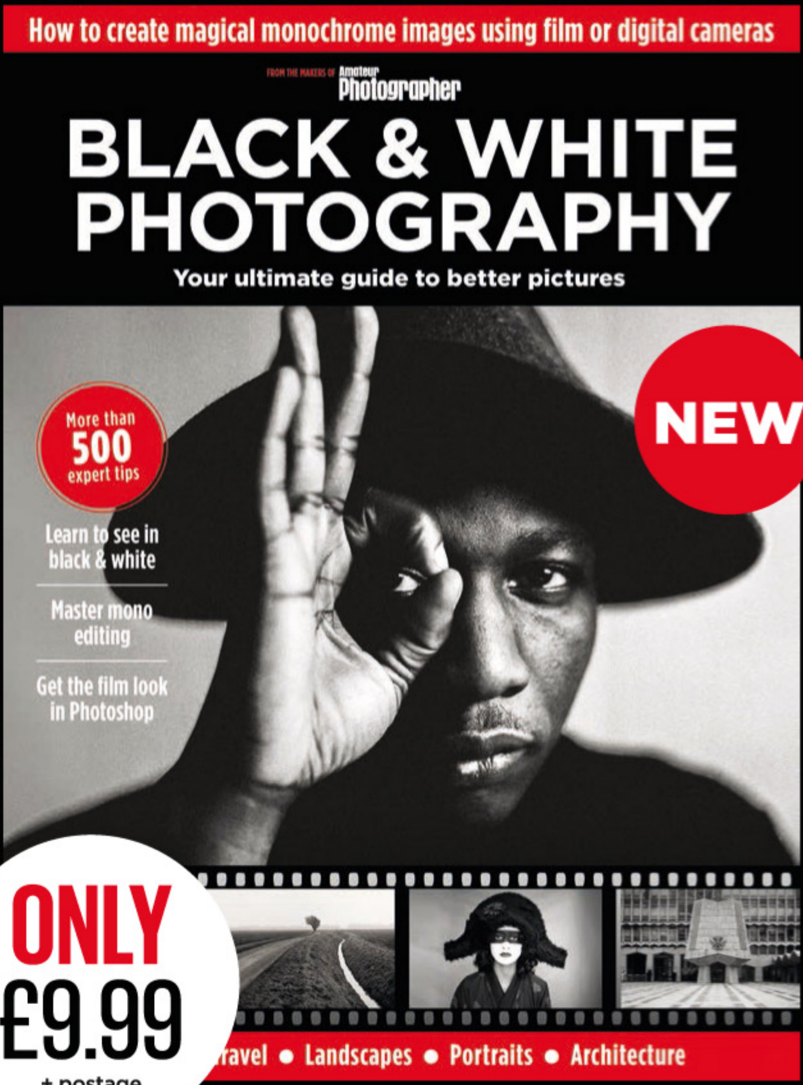
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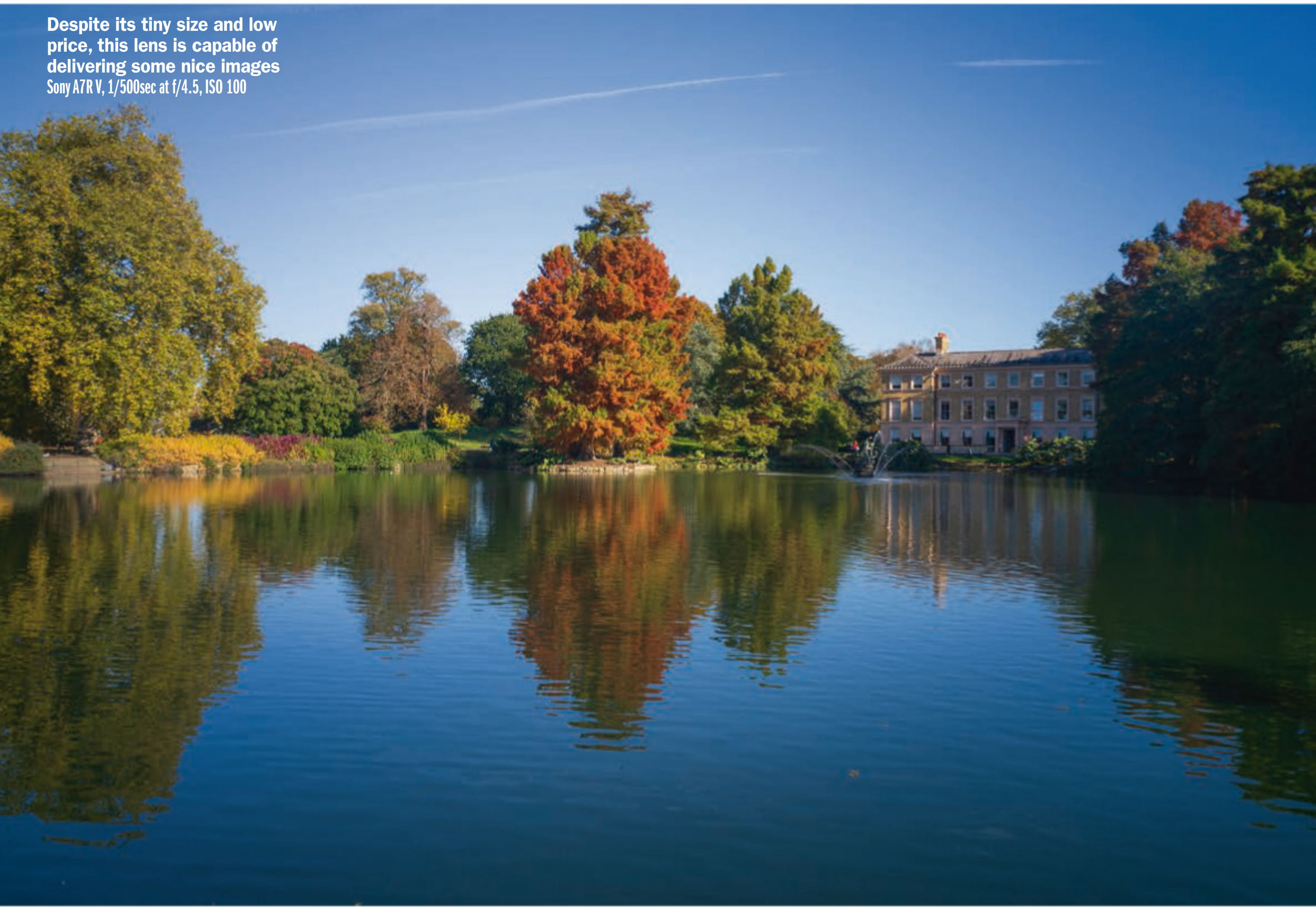


Despite its tiny size and low price, this lens is capable of delivering some nice images
Sony A7R V, 1/500sec at f/4.5, ISO 100

Viltrox AF 28mm F4.5 VCM ASPH ED

It's the smallest and cheapest autofocus lens for full-frame mirrorless cameras. **Andy Westlake** finds out whether this tiny optic is more than just a gimmick

While full-frame mirrorless cameras now dominate the market, the lenses to fit them have tended to become larger, heavier and more expensive than their DSLR equivalents. But with its AF 28mm F4.5 VCM ASPH ED, Viltrox has decided to buck this trend. This lens is a mere 15mm long, weighs just 60g, and costs under £100. That makes it by far the smallest and cheapest autofocus lens you can buy for full-frame mirrorless cameras. Initially at least, it's available solely in Sony E-mount.

To get some perspective on what Viltrox has achieved here, we just need to look at the alternatives. Previously, the smallest full-frame autofocus lens for Sony cameras was the Samyang AF 35mm F2.8 FE, which weighs just 86g, but is more than double the length (33mm). Even if we consider APS-C format optics, the Viltrox AF 28mm F4.5 FE manages to be slimmer and fractionally lighter than the tiny Sony E 20mm F2.8.

Unsurprisingly, Viltrox has made some significant compromises to achieve this tiny size – and some plain eccentric design decisions too. Most obviously, there's no manual focus ring, the aperture is fixed at f/4.5, and you don't even get a filter thread. So is this lens really just an attention-grabbing gimmick, or could it be a genuinely useful addition to photographers' kit bags?

When used on APS-C, the lens gives a very natural perspective
Sony A6000, 1/500sec at f/4.5, ISO 100

Features

Given its low price and small front element, you might think this lens has skimped on the optics. But as indicated by the initials in its name, that's not entirely the case. Its 6-element, 6-group design includes 2 aspherical elements and 2 made from extra-low dispersion (ED) glass. As tends to be the case these days, most of the glass is concentrated towards the back, with the rear element being dramatically larger than the front, at 26mm in diameter.

Autofocus is driven by a voice coil motor (VCM), with the 32cm minimum focus distance delivering a rather modest 0.11x magnification. There's no fancy internal or floating focusing mechanisms here, either, with the entire lens moving back and forth as a unit. There's no adjustable diaphragm, but there is an unusual octagonal aperture plate over the front element.

Image quality holds up well at minimum focus, but the magnification isn't very high
Sony A7R V, 1/60sec at f/4.5, ISO 1600

You get no means of attaching filters or a hood, or even a front cap. Instead, there's a built-in cover for the front glass, which is opened and closed using a small lever on the front.

While the lens is designed for Sony's full-frame cameras, it also works perfectly happily on APS-C models. Here it provides a 'perfect normal' focal length equivalent to 42mm on full-frame. This means that when used on Sony's A6000-series cameras, it imparts a very natural-looking perspective to your images.

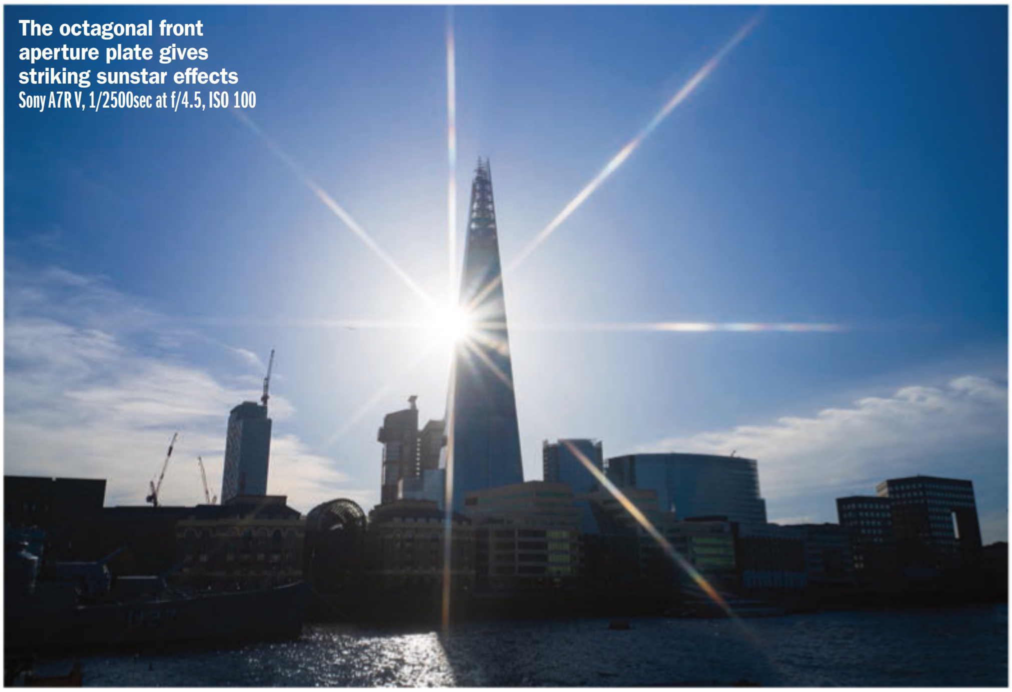
Build and handling

Despite its bargain price, the lens feels perfectly decently built. The mount is metal, and the slender plastic barrel doesn't flex in any way. There's a nice, ridged grip around the outside which helps with attaching the lens to your camera and removing it after use. It's all rather nicer than the Samyang AF 35mm F2.8 FE, which feels decidedly cheaply built, in comparison.

Of course, given its tiny size, the lens adds practically nothing to the size or heft of your camera. Even on Sony's smallest APS-C bodies, it barely extends beyond the handgrip. Use it on full-frame A7-series models, and you'll hardly even notice it's there. You could, entirely plausibly, use it instead of a body cap, which I guess is the whole idea.

Unusually, when the front cover is open and the lens isn't powered on, the optical unit slides freely back and forth within the barrel. At its minimum focus position, the front element pokes out a couple of millimetres past the cover, and almost flush with the front of the housing. As a result, Viltrox advises that you should always open the front cover before turning on your camera. This is because the lens goes through a calibration cycle that involves rapidly racking it through its full focus range. So if the cover is closed, the lens will end up pushing against it.

You will, of course, inevitably forget to do this on a regular basis. Thankfully it doesn't appear to damage the lens, but it can cause operational problems with older cameras. You may have to switch them off and on again, or remove and reattach the lens, for autofocus to work.



The octagonal front aperture plate gives striking sunstar effects

Sony A7R V, 1/2500sec at f/4.5, ISO 100

Autofocus

In general, most unit-focus lenses autofocus rather slowly and hesitantly. But thanks to its voice coil motor, the Viltrox AF 28mm F4.5 generally performs pretty well. However, that relatively slow aperture means it can struggle in low light.

I used it on a number of cameras, ranging from the APS-C A6000 from 2014, through to the 60MP full-frame A7R V from 2022. In general, it autofocuses quickly and essentially silently, and I saw no problems with accuracy, either. However, with my old A7 II it appears to use contrast detection only, which makes it decidedly sluggish.

As this is a unit-focusing lens, the angle of view does narrow visibly on focusing closer. Such focus breathing is of little consequence to photographers, but videographers will want to avoid pulling focus between subjects during recording.

Performance

Obviously, it would be crazy to expect a sub-£100 lens to perform as well as a premium optic costing ten times as much. But I was pleasantly surprised by the images I shot with the Viltrox AF 28mm F4.5. As long as you don't get too hung up on pixel-peeping, it's capable of delivering rather nice results.

In fact the lens is impressively sharp in the middle of the frame, even on the 60MP A7R V. This crispness fades gradually towards the edges, with things getting noticeably smudgy in the corners. Sharpness is maintained well throughout the focus distance range.

That fixed f/4.5 aperture does, however, mean that with real-world subjects, much of the scene will be slightly out-of-focus. You won't really get much in the way of 'bokeh' as such – just areas that aren't perfectly crisp. But often these parts will be 'sharp enough' if you look at the full image instead of the pixels. Indeed most of my images looked absolutely fine full-screen on my 24in monitor, which means they should be good enough for A3 prints.

Viltrox doesn't appear to make use of in-camera corrections for either distortion or chromatic aberration. However, distortion is very well-corrected optically. There's a little pincushion-type bending of straight lines along the edges of the frame, but it's unlikely to be a problem in real-world use. Adobe software has the requisite profile to correct it fully, too.

Lateral chromatic aberration can be visible in the form of red/blue fringing along high-contrast edges towards the corners of the frame, even in JPEG files. But the effect isn't huge, and it's a one-click fix in raw processing.

If you disable shading compensation, you will encounter significant vignetting, and of course you can't stop down to reduce it. However, it does get suppressed effectively by the in-camera compensation function. If you use the lens on an APS-C camera, you won't see much vignetting at all, as those dark corners get cropped out.

Where things get funky with this lens is when shooting into the light. With no shading of the front element, it can be prone to spectacular flare spots when the sun is just outside the frame. However, you can see this in the viewfinder, and either adjust the composition or shade the front of the lens with your left hand to make it go away.

With bright point light sources within the frame, that octagonal aperture plate on the front kicks in, generating 8-point starburst patterns. It's an interesting design decision, but I'm not entirely convinced by the effect. If the sun is within your image, the resultant rays can stretch all the way to the edge of the frame. This makes the effect distinctly overbearing.

Verdict

WITH its AF 28mm F4.5, Viltrox has done a clever job of cutting the design right back to make a true 'body cap lens'. It's pretty amazing that something this small, lightweight and cheap covers full-frame and can still autofocus. It feels churlish to criticise it in any way.

That 28mm focal length can be quite a nice option on both full-frame and APS-C cameras, although in distinctly different ways. The fixed f/4.5 aperture means that this isn't a great lens for night-time or indoor shooting, but it worked much better than I expected for such things as cityscapes and landscapes.

But does this lens really make sense? Obviously, nothing can beat it when you really want to minimise bulk. It's perhaps easiest to recommend to APS-C users, but if you're carrying around a larger A7-series camera anyway, I'd be inclined to go for a conventional compact prime.

Ultimately, the Viltrox AF 28mm F4.5 VCM ASPH ED provides a unique option that no other lens can match. But it's precisely all the things that make it so small and cheap – the lack of a focus ring, aperture mechanism, or focus thread – that could leave users frustrated. And its starburst effect is, frankly, a bit odd. It isn't just a gimmick, but I wouldn't want it to be the only lens I was carrying.

Data file

Price £86

Filter diameter n/a

Lens elements 6

Groups 6

Diaphragm blades n/a

Aperture f/4.5

Minimum focus 32cm

Length 15.3mm

Diameter 60.3mm

Weight 60g

Lens mount Sony E

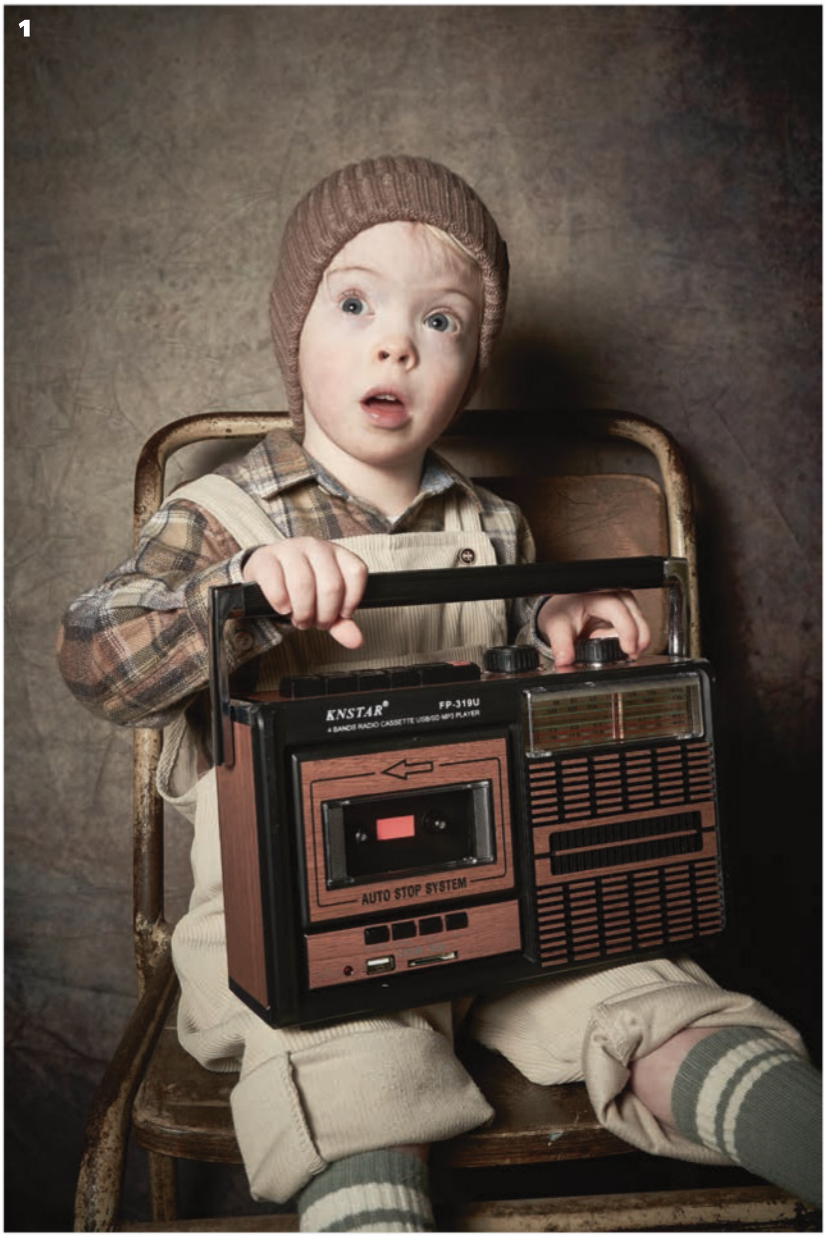
Included accessories Rear cap

Amateur Photographer Testbench Recommended ★★★★

Reader Portfolio

Spotlight on readers' excellent images and how they captured them

1



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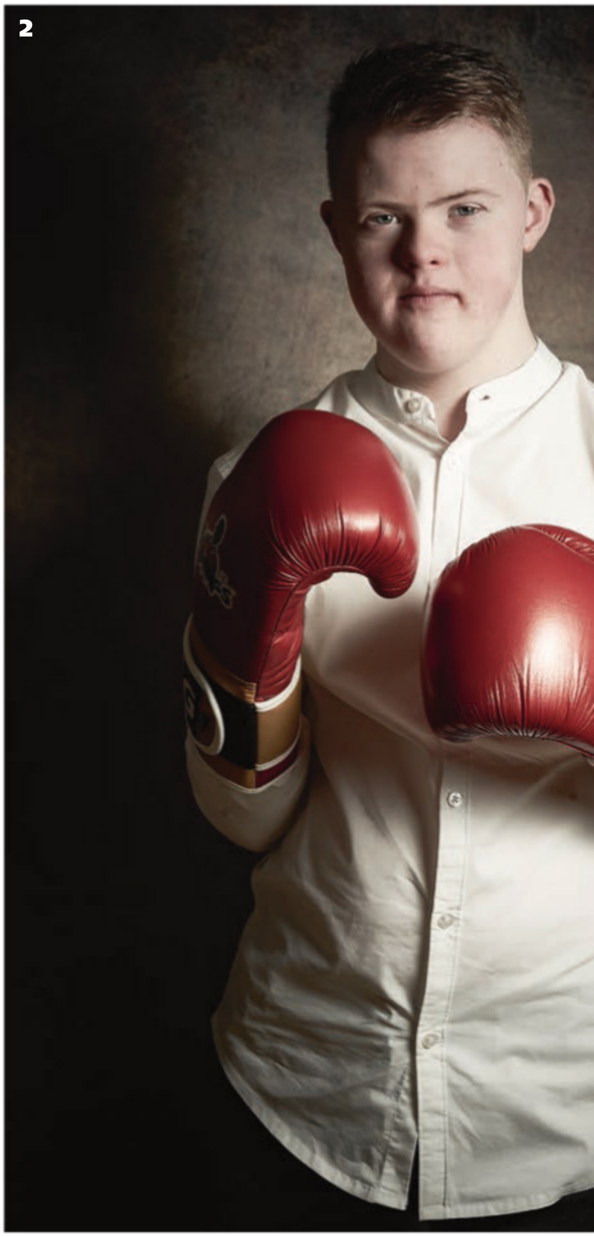

Debbie Todd, Co Durham

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About Debbie

Debbie works full-time in social care, but is also a photographer who belongs to the RPS Women in Photography group.

How did you get into photography?

I always loved taking pictures as a child but wasn't able to afford to do it much. My Nanna used to let me use her little point-and-shoot and get them developed in the post by Truprint. As a teenager, I used disposable cameras for trips away and nights out. When I had my son I bought my first DSLR camera to take pictures of him, and ended up taking photos of my friend's children and tried to teach myself how to take photos. I had a break for around seven years then signed up to start a degree for my mental health in 2018 (at 38 years old) and haven't looked back. I spent five years studying and now have a master's degree and I've just started renting a studio in a historic building near Durham in the hope to become a professional photographer, working on campaigns to tell stories of underrepresented and marginalised communities. I work full time but spend my spare time working on projects at my own expense.

Brody

1 Brody, listening to music.

Sony A7 III, Sony FE 28-70mm F3.5-5.6 OSS, 1/125sec at f/16, ISO 100

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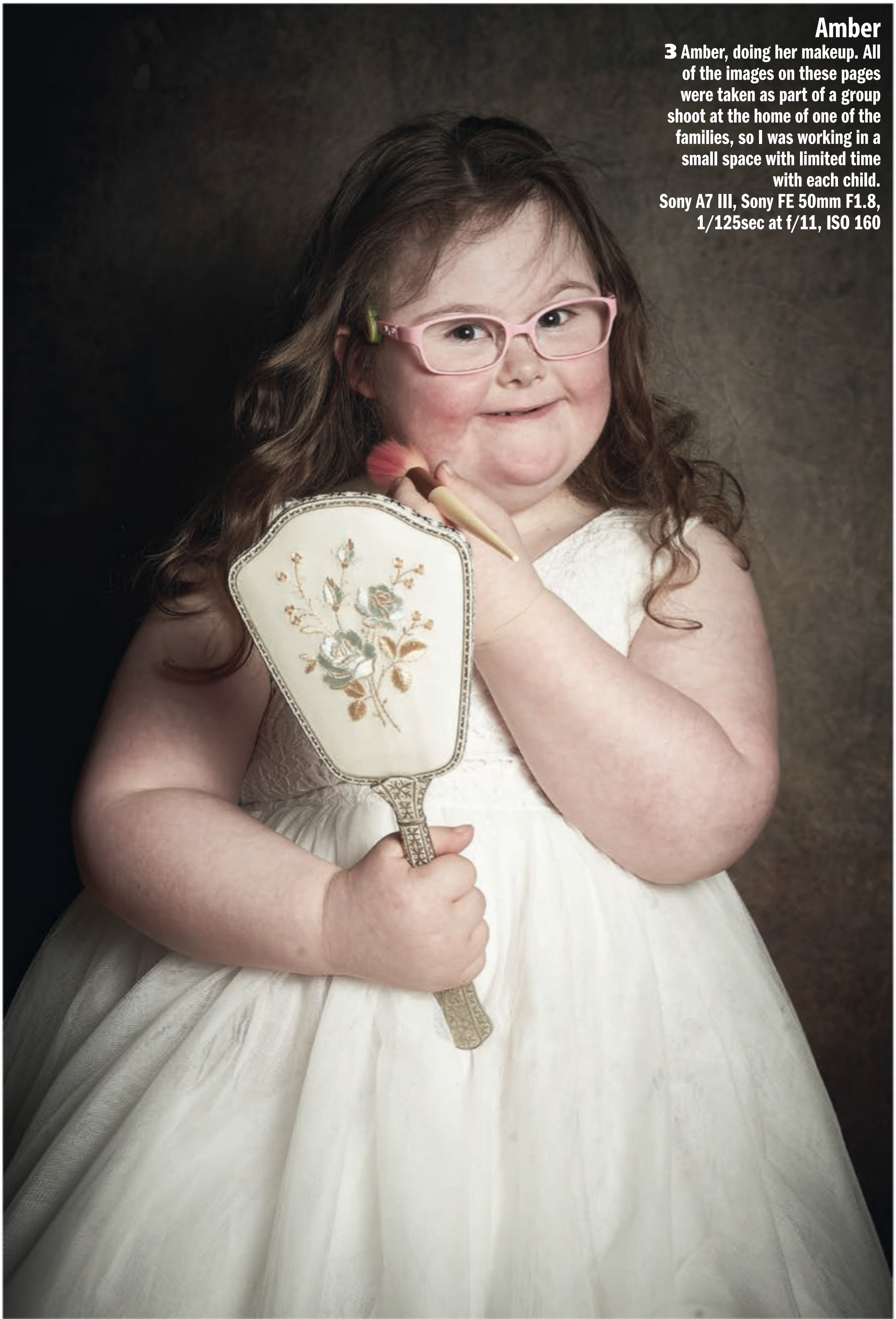
See page 3 for details of how to submit. You could see your photos here in a future issue! Please note: the prize is subject to change.

Calum

2 Calum, boxing training.

Sony A7 III, Sony FE 50mm F1.8, 1/125sec at f/13, ISO 160



Amber

3 Amber, doing her makeup. All of the images on these pages were taken as part of a group shoot at the home of one of the families, so I was working in a small space with limited time with each child.

Sony A7 III, Sony FE 50mm F1.8, 1/125sec at f/11, ISO 160

What do you love about photography?
I love having an idea, developing it and seeing how the outcomes compare to the vision I had originally.

Favourite subjects
I am really interested in people, especially those who look different and those who are from different backgrounds. I want to know their story and aim to share it with others through one image.

How and where do you find inspiration?
I am inspired by people I see, driving along the road, in the local shop, on the internet. I also look at images online, in books, in galleries, I love seeing images in print.

What was your first camera?
Nikon D60.

Current kit
Sony A7 III.

Favourite lens
A 50mm portrait lens.

Favourite accessory
A Godox speedlight and Kate Backdrops pop-up backdrops are my must-haves, as I do a lot of my work out in the community.

Dream purchase
A Hasselblad or something I probably wouldn't even know how to use. I'd love to learn how to do glass plates, but I don't think I have the patience.

What software do you use for editing?
Capture One, I tend to just edit the colour and contrast etc. Though I loved Photoshop back in the day, I barely require those features now.

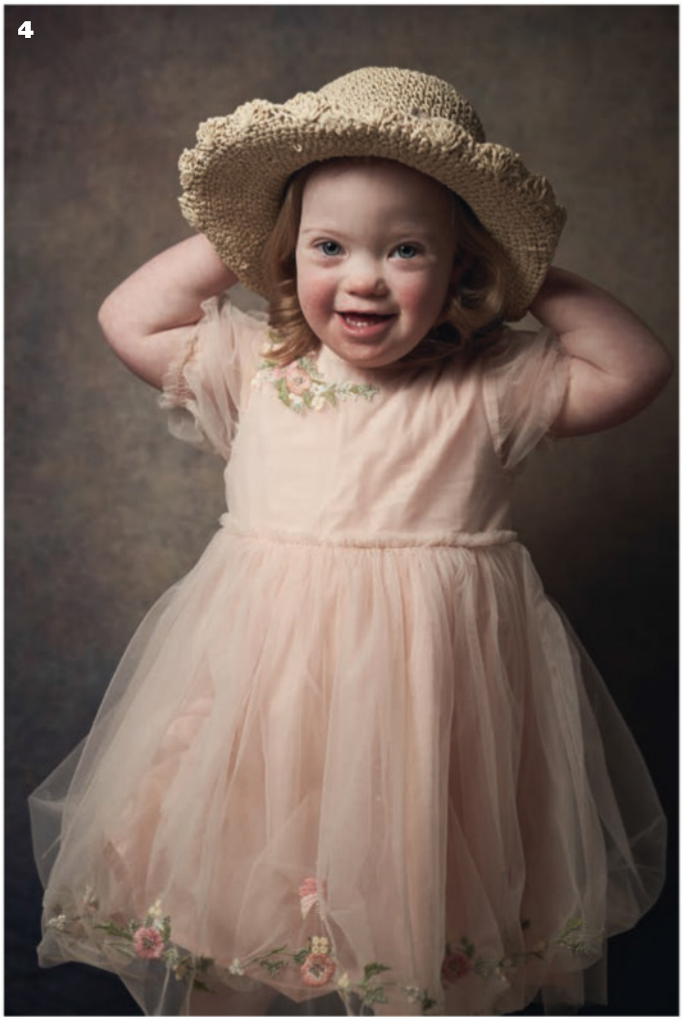
Favourite photographers
I love the work of Diane Arbus and her curiosity about people who weren't seen as 'normal' in society. Also, I'm inspired by Richard Avedon's outdoor studio-style portraits, which made me realise that anywhere can be a studio.

Favourite photography books
I have a vast collection of books full of paintings as that's my inspiration, but I do have some photobooks from the likes of Joel-Peter Witkin, Julia Fullerton-Batten and Tim Walker. All very different in style but I'm drawn to the crisp images and creative style.

Favourite tips
Be true to yourself and your subject, no matter what it is, and don't take things too personally.

About your pictures
I tend to create a body of work on a particular theme to tell various stories. This project is looking at children with Down's Syndrome and the positivity they bring into their community. The images look at their skills and interests, and the aim is to promote the fact that they are all unique individuals who enrich their families' lives.

4



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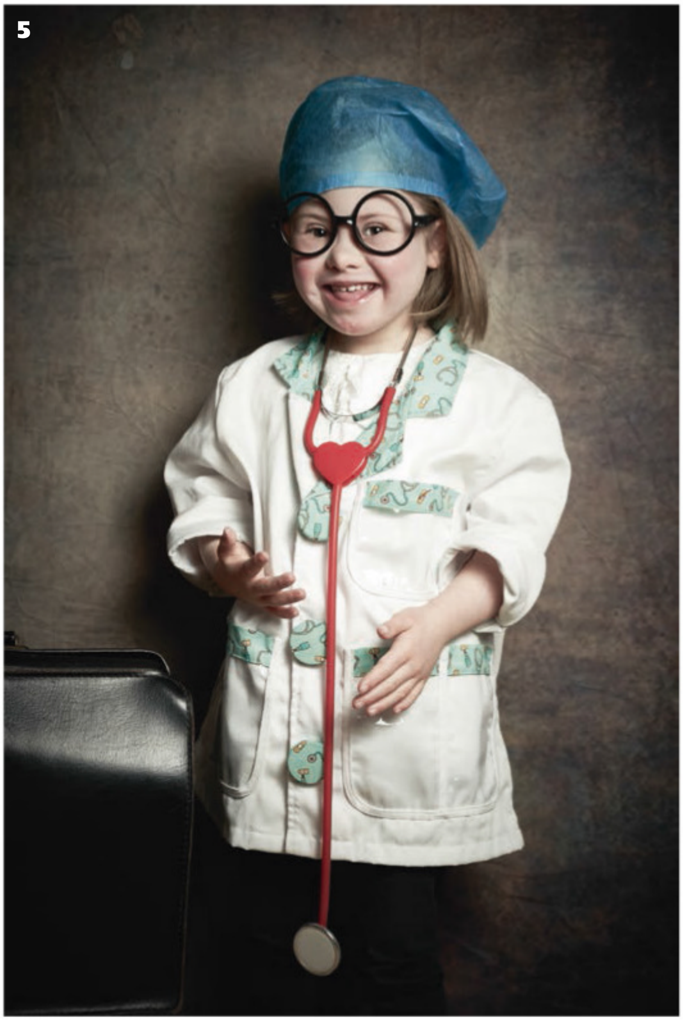

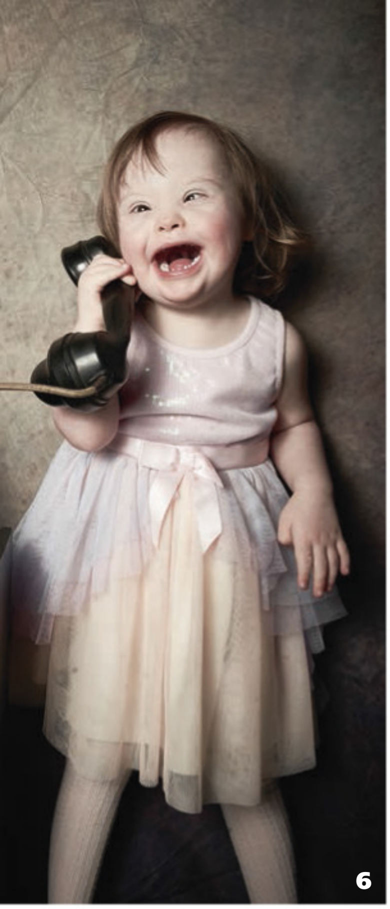

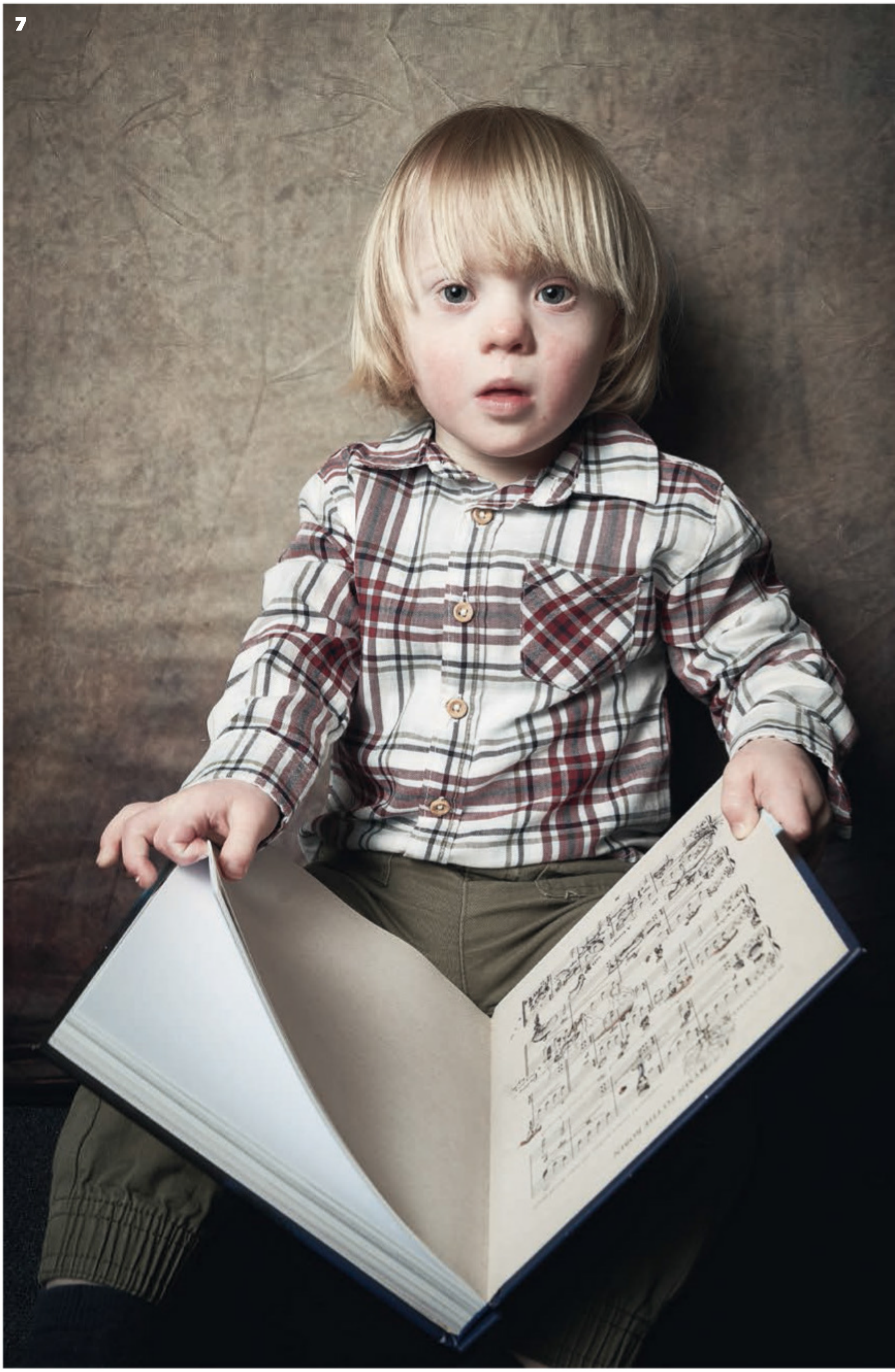

Florence

4 Florence, dressing up.
Sony A7 III, Sony FE 50mm F1.8, 1/320sec at f/3.2, ISO 50

Layla

5 Layla, playing doctors.
Sony A7 III, Sony FE 50mm F1.8, 1/125sec at f/11, ISO 260

Lucy

6 Lucy, chatting on the telephone.
Sony A7 III, Sony FE 28-70mm F3.5-5.6 OSS, 1/160sec at f/18, ISO 200

William

7 William, reading his favourite book.
Sony A7 III, Sony FE 28-70mm F3.5-5.6 OSS, 1/125sec at f/10, ISO 200

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AMP2422

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Nigel Atherton, *Editor*

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Amateur Photographer of the Year

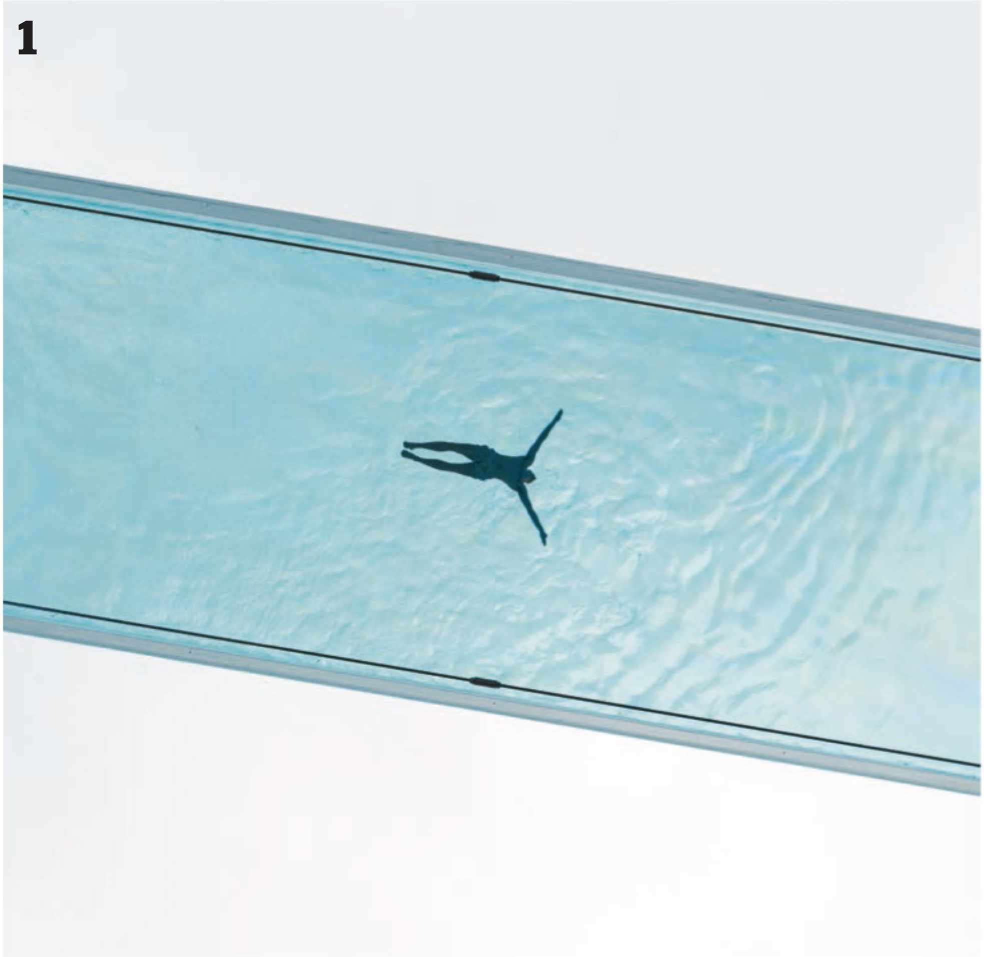
Here are the top ten images uploaded to Photocrowd from Round Ten, Open, with comments by the AP team and our guest judges

Round Ten
Open

For the first time, this year we decided to have a round that was completely open, in which there were no restrictions whatsoever on subject matter. The entries were as varied and creative as we had hoped they would be, and as it had the potential to be a tricky category to judge, given the wide-ranging nature of the styles and subjects, we called upon two guest judges to help us.

We hope you enjoy the results of this round, and that you have been as inspired by this year's APOY as much as we have.

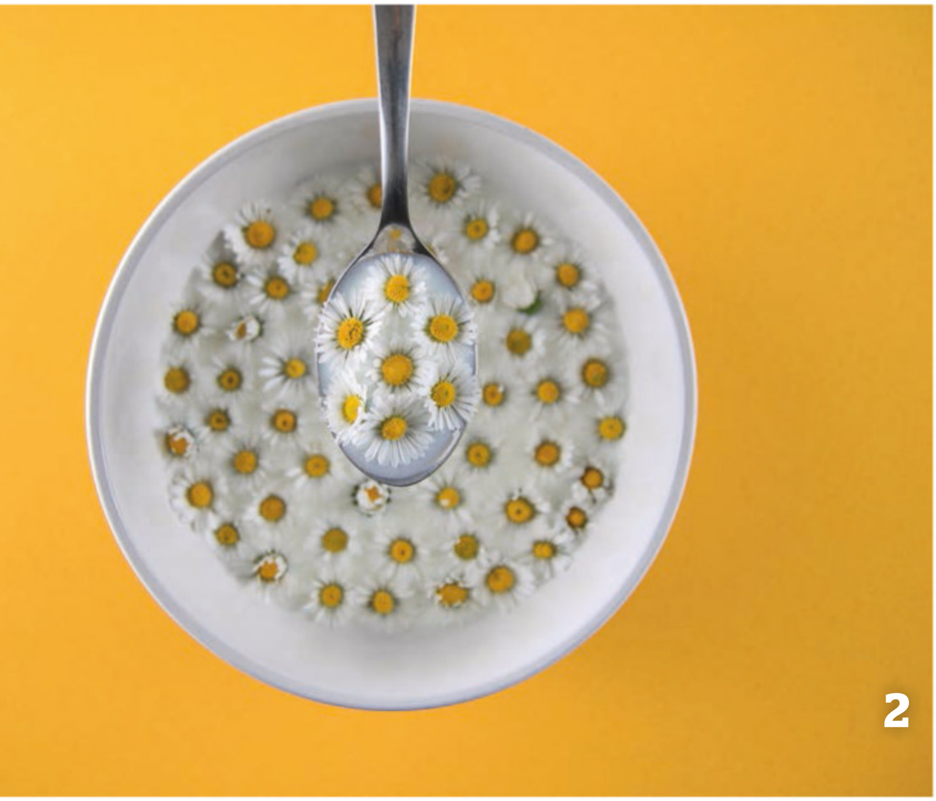
1



1 Andrew Robertson UK
100pts

Canon EOS R5, 24-240mm at 47mm, 1/40sec at f/8, ISO 200

With this clever image, Andrew has played with our sense of perspective. Although logic tells us we should be looking down on this scene, somehow we know we're looking up instead. The composition is spot on, with the blue stripe slicing diagonally through the image, flanked by the blank white sky. It really is simplicity at its best – something that is emphasised by the balanced square crop, and the placement of the swimmer in the centre of the frame. The slightly bleached-out tones keep things light and airy, and complement the overall approach.



2

2 Gavin Rampling
UK 90pts

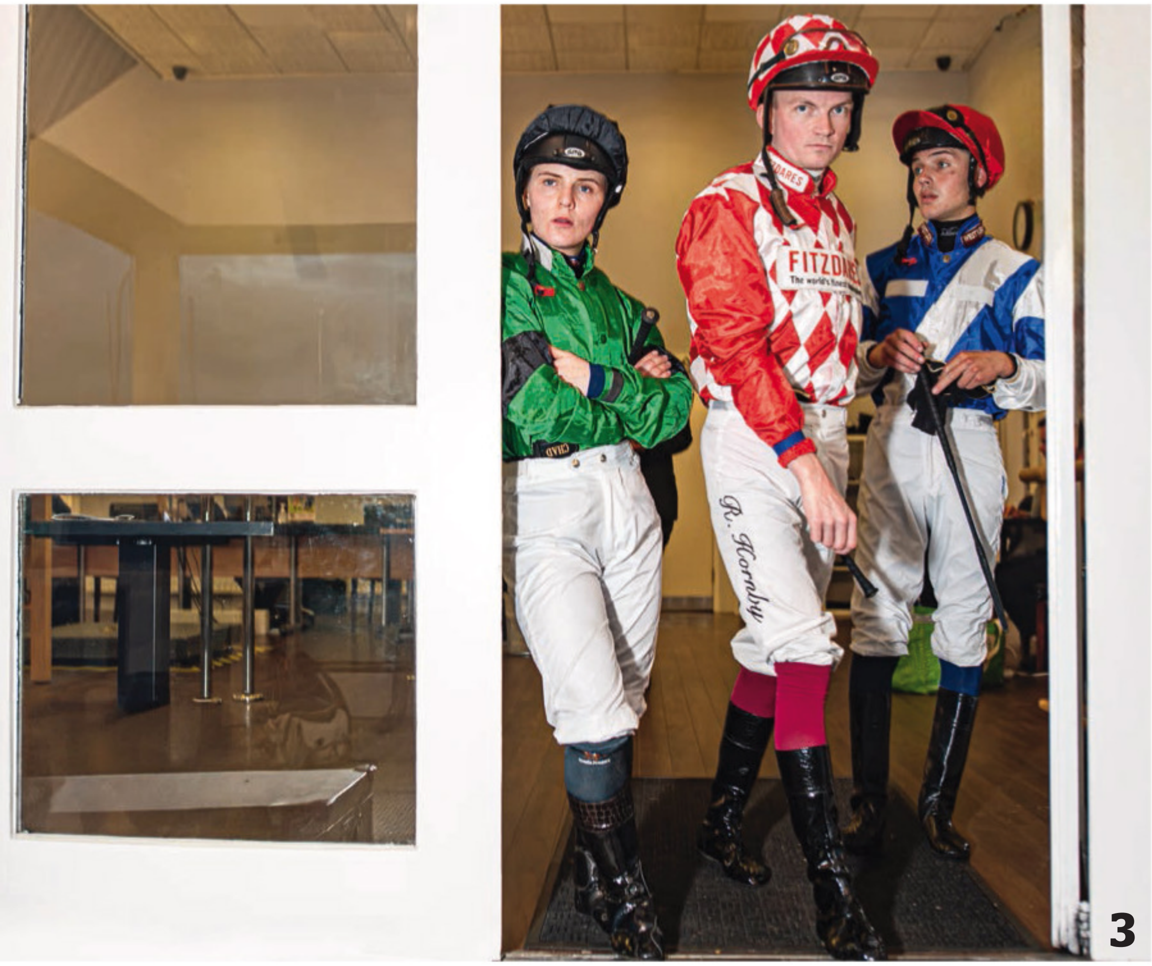
Canon EOS 70D, 17-50mm at 19mm, 1/250sec at f/2.8, ISO 100

Guest judge Maria Falconer says:

'Scrolling through the entries to Amateur Photographer of the Year, this image immediately caught my eye. Simultaneously loud, fragile, amusing and confusing, it contains a rich mix of ingredients that are impossible to resist.

'The subject matter is simply presented in shades of white, grey and yellow; a minimalist approach that creates a strong geometric design. The circle is key, a highly effective recurring motif that draws us into its colourful concentric formations. A bold yellow rectangle foregrounds the subject and lends weight to the delicate daisy hue. And the grey ellipse slices into the scene, disrupting the regularity and dividing the symmetry. Visually, the effect is striking.

'But it's not the daisies, the composition or the sharp colour scheme that gives this picture its captivating allure. That's down to the imagination of the maker who has made a unique and powerful photograph – congratulations on a superb job.'



3

CAMERA CLUB HIGHEST SCORE

3 Andy Holloway
UK 80pts

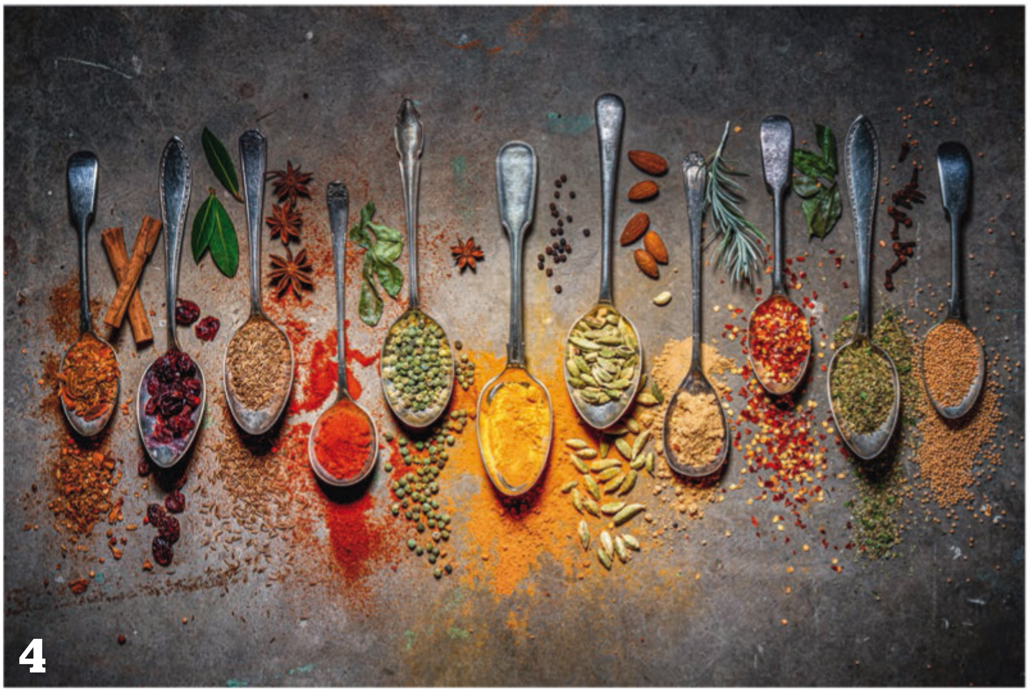
Nikon D750, 24mm, 1/160sec at f/3.2, ISO 200

Andy has shown us an excellent reportage image here. Despite the bright colours, our eye in fact goes straight to the expressions on the faces of the three jockeys and the dynamic between them. Although none of them is looking at the camera, there's still a powerful connection between subject and viewer, and the anticipation of their coming race is palpable (the clean silks and jodhpurs the giveaway that the race hasn't yet been run). Andy has made excellent use of the doorway to frame the shot tightly. Now all we're left asking is what the result of the race was!

4 Julia Martin UK 70pts

Sony A7R Mark III, 24-70mm, 1/2sec at f/11, ISO 100

A well-crafted still-life image is a very pleasing thing, and the flat-lay approach requires precision and patience as well as creativity. Julia clearly possesses all these skills in abundance. She has considered not only the placement of the spoons, which appear almost like notes on a musical stave, but also the balance of the spices' colours and where they should be placed. The bright yellow turmeric is the perfect choice for the centre of the frame, as our eye goes straight to it, and it is enclosed by harmonising tones either side. There's also bags of texture to this shot, and we can almost smell the heady spices, too. It's an image that hits more than one of our senses, and is all the stronger for that.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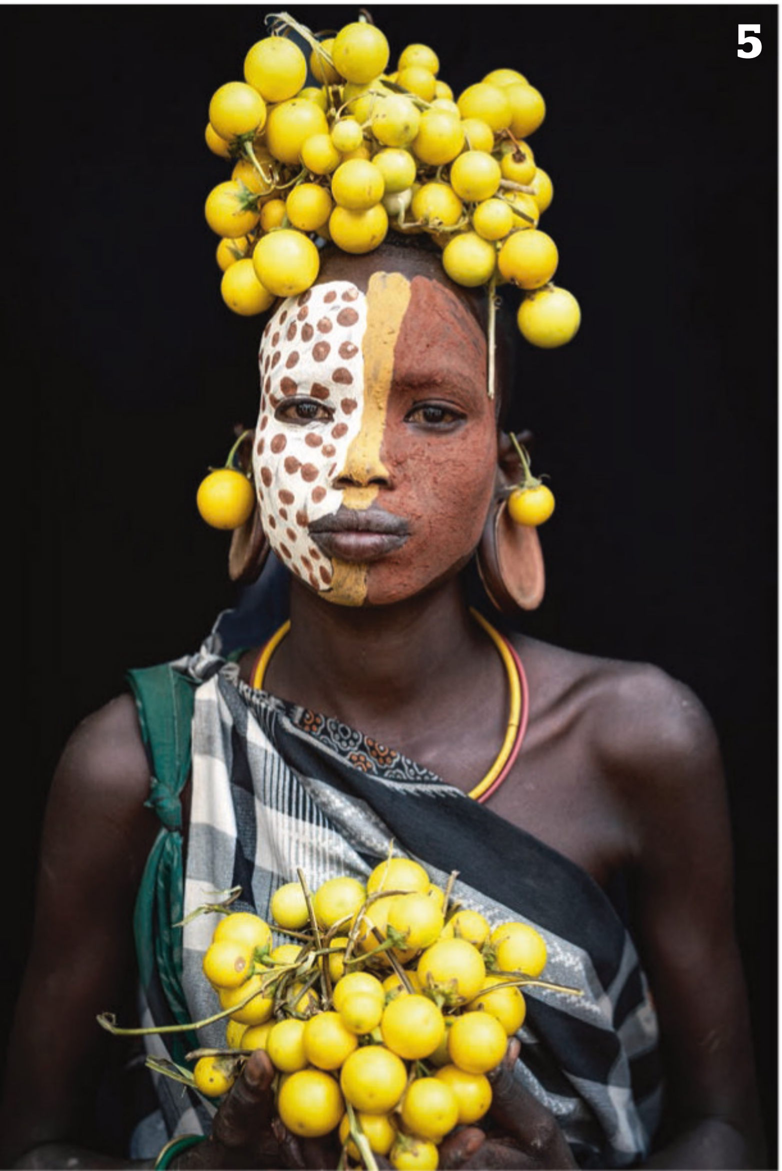
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5 Lynn Fraser UK 60pts

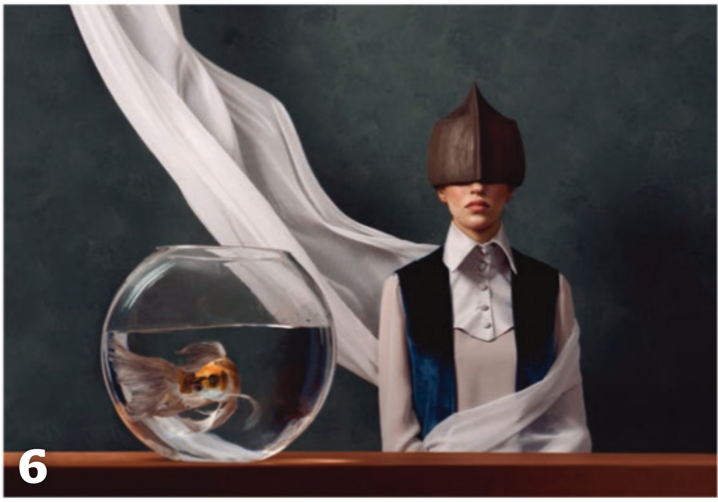
Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, 50mm, 1/400sec at f/2.8, ISO 400

This wonderfully direct portrait earned Lynn enough points to jump to the top of the leaderboard and win this year's APOY – congratulations! By taking such an apparently simple approach to the image, Lynn gives the viewer the opportunity to really study the Suri tribe member's expression, facial adornments, modificatons and headdress, while the ultra-plain background means there are no distractions. We are left wanting to know more about this woman and her story, which is what any good portrait should do.

6 Peyman Naderi Iran 50pts

Nikon D750, 105mm, 1/160sec at f/8, ISO 100

Peyman's portraits are always stunningly executed. This image is no exception, and its nod to surrealism leaves much open to interpretation. The swirl of the chiffon echoes that of the fish's fins and tail, while that same sense of fragility contrasts with the harder texture of the model's hat and the inscrutable expression and pose. Peyman states he is exploring the idea that 'we do not have the slightest clue that we are walking in the wrong direction'. It's a picture to spend time with, so we reach our own conclusions about it.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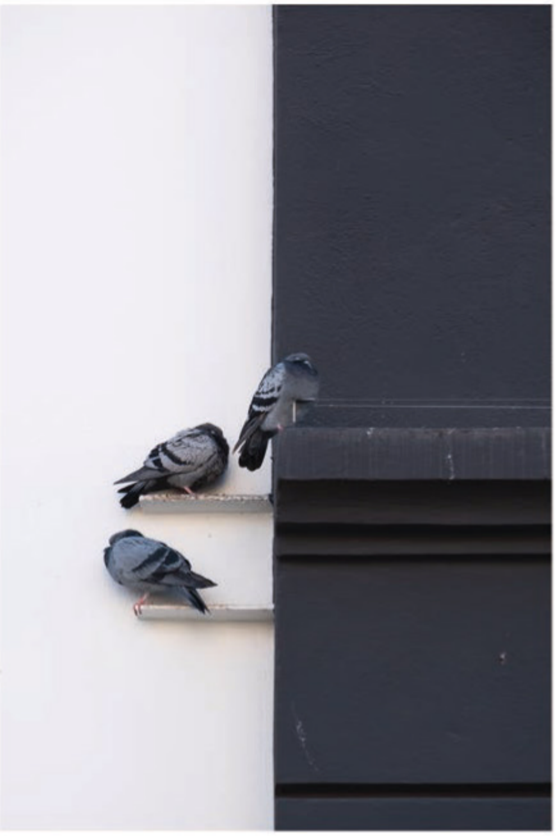
7 Leo Dequet Norway 45pts

Fujifilm X-T50, 55-200mm at 200mm, 1/60sec at f/8, ISO 250

One of the best things about having an eye for a picture is that you spot things that non-photographers would probably walk straight past. This appealing vignette is one such example. The way in which the three unassuming pigeons have placed themselves on the ledges looks almost deliberate, while cropping so that the white and dark grey sections are divided exactly 50:50 works very well indeed. It could almost be a black & white image barring the pink of the pigeons' legs. A little tweaking so that all lines are perfectly straight is the kind of attention to detail that elevates such an apparently simple image into the top ten.



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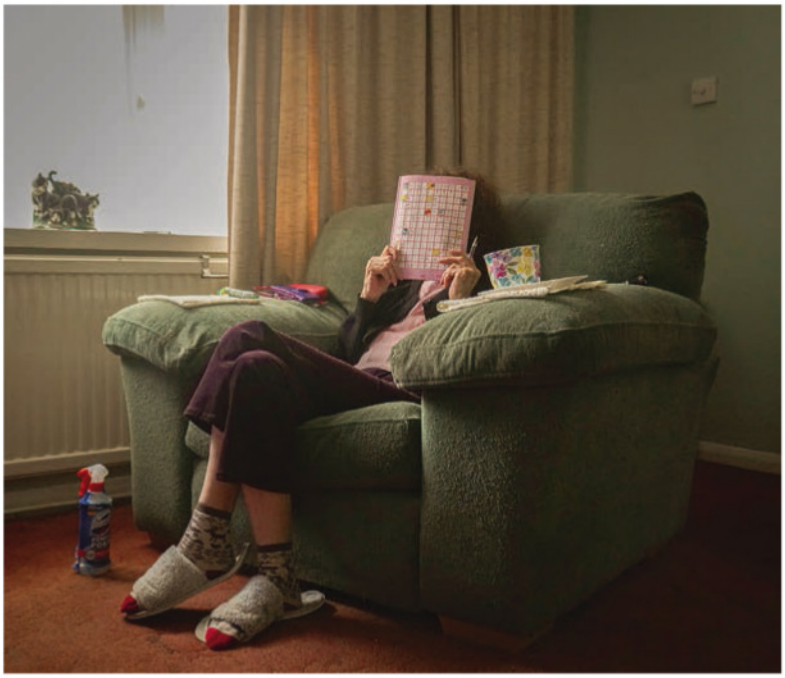
ROUND TEN WINNER, YOUNG APOY



Elliot Legg UK 100pts

Sony A7 Mark III, 28-70mm at 28mm, 1/125sec at f/4.5, ISO 6400

No fewer than five judges awarded this image first place – and understandably so. It's an intriguing shot that leaves us with more questions than answers. Who is the woman in the chair? Why is there a bottle of Domestos by her feet? Is she playing, reading or hiding from the camera? Elliot has done an excellent job of capturing a moment that will long stay in the memory. Great work.

Winning kit from Camera Centre UK

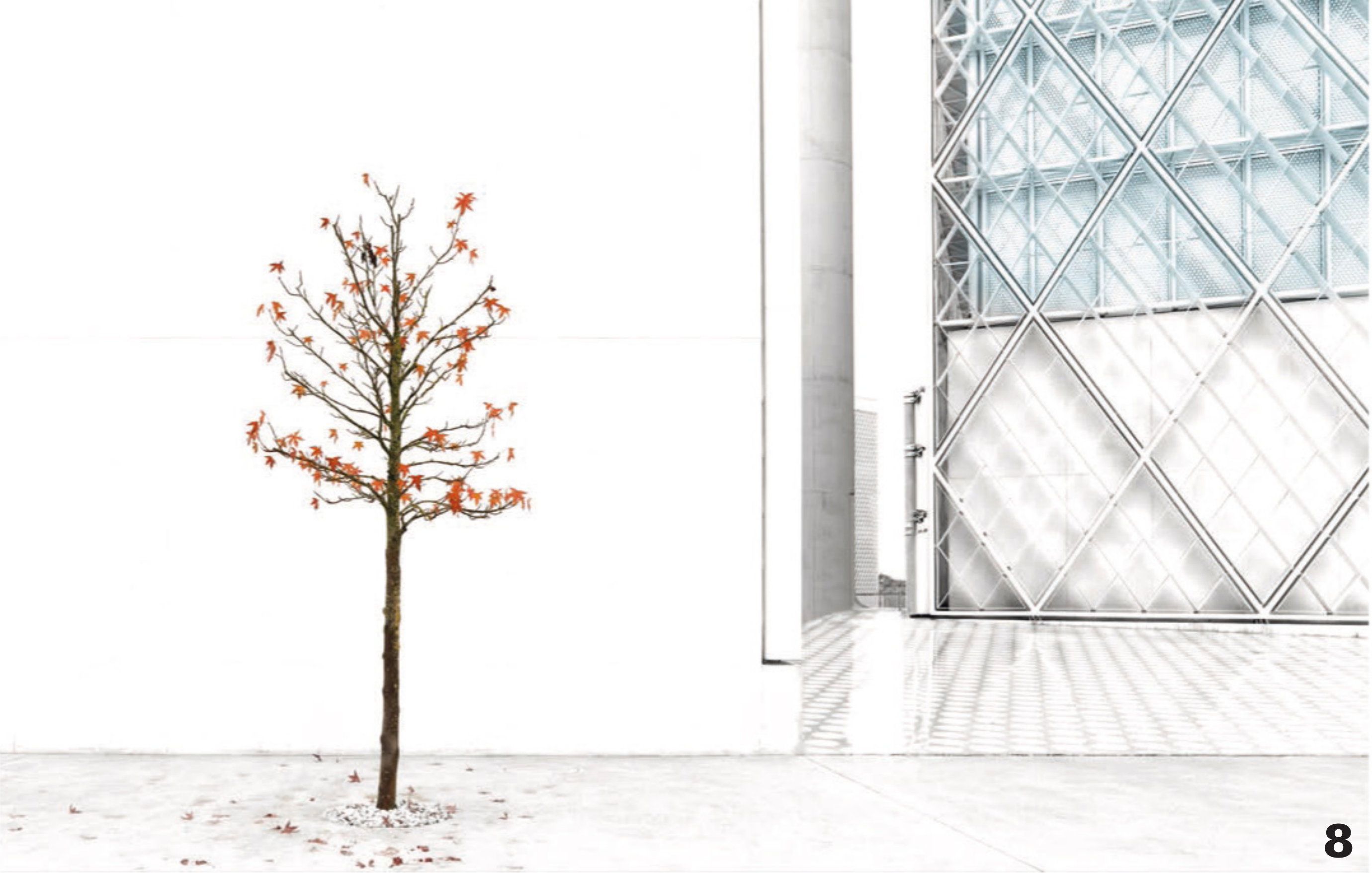
What gear did our top ten photographers use?

For his first-placed image, Andrew Robertson used the Canon RF24-240mm F4-6.3 IS USM. Compatible with Canon's EOS R and EOS RP full-frame mirrorless cameras, the lens is constructed of 21 elements in 15 groups, features a highly effective five-stop image stabiliser and 50cm minimum-focus distance. In its four-star review in AP it was said to be 'a fine example of a superzoom'. This lens can be purchased at Camera Centre UK for £969.

In seventh place, Leo Dequet also used a superzoom – this time the Fujifilm XF55-200mmF3.5-4.8 R LM OIS. With built-in stabilisation of up to 4.5 stops, an 84-305mm-equivalent zoom range and a metal construction, this hugely versatile lens is ideal for travel, wildlife, portraits and more. It is constructed of 14 elements in 10 groups. This excellent lens can be found at Camera Centre UK for £599.

In fourth and eighth, Julia Martin used a Sony A7R Mark V for her eighth-placed shot. This full-frame mirrorless camera features remarkably reliable subject-detection autofocus; a 61MP sensor that delivers superb image quality; robust build and generally fine handling; and a superb viewfinder and highly flexible screen, as well as useful variable resolution raw recording. Receiving five stars when reviewed in AP, this camera can be bought at Camera Centre UK for £3,649.

To see the full range, visit www.cameracentreuk.com



8

8 Julia Martin
UK Opts

Sony A7R Mark V, 20-70mm at 24mm, 1/200sec at f/7.1, ISO 640

Guest judge Ben Brain says:

'For me, this lovely image has wonderful echoes of the New Topographics. Much of their work spoke to humanity's relationship with the environment and landscape, often looking at suburban and urban development as a subject for their photography. This solitary tree, nearly bare, set against the stark, minimal concrete backdrop, could also be read as a symbol of resilience against urban sprawl and the fragile balance between nature and human development.

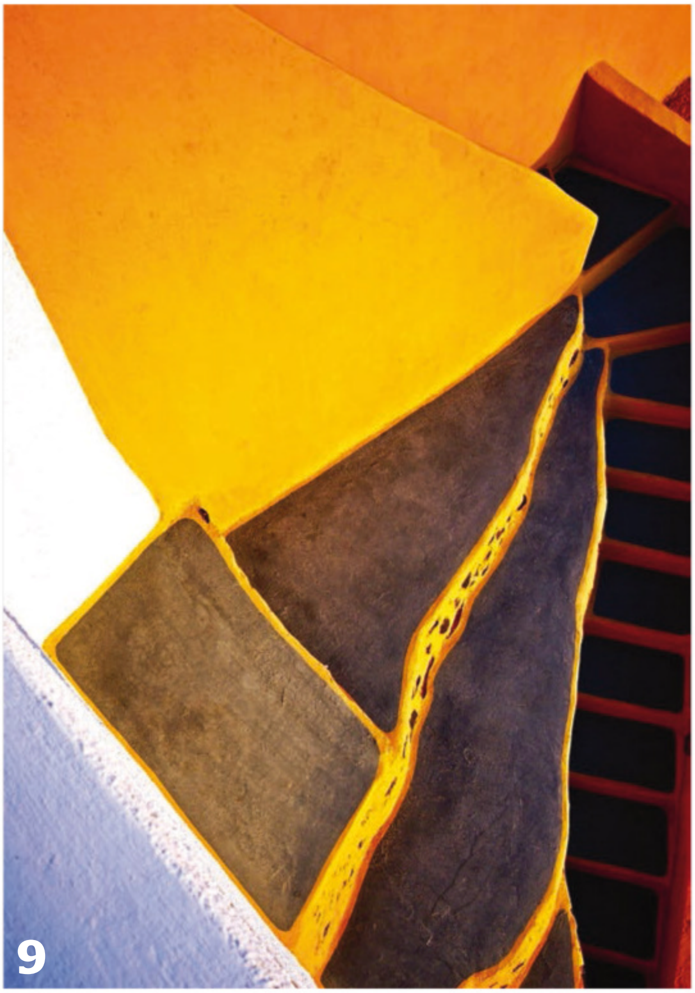
'One of the New Topographics, the American photographer Robert Adams eloquently wrote in his book *Beauty in Photography* that most "successful" images need to work on three levels: geography, autobiography and metaphor. He made the point that in isolation of one another, these characteristics can make an image boring, self-indulgent or pretentious but when working together, in harmony, they can create an image with depth, substance and meaning.

'The high-key tones and minimal composition evoke a reflective mood. The confident and accomplished image has both personal and universal vibes and perhaps could be seen as using Adams's trio of characteristics.'

9 Theororus Alfred de Haan Spain 35pts

Sony A700, 20mm, 1/100sec at f/8, ISO 200

There is a glorious energy to this image that is rarely seen in architectural photography. The golden colours are instantly uplifting, contrasting as they do with the cooler blue-white areas, and the irregularity of the lines manage to be dynamic without being confusing. Like a lesson in geometry, within this shot we have quadrilaterals and multiple triangles, all of which come together in a way that allows our eye to travel around the image repeatedly.



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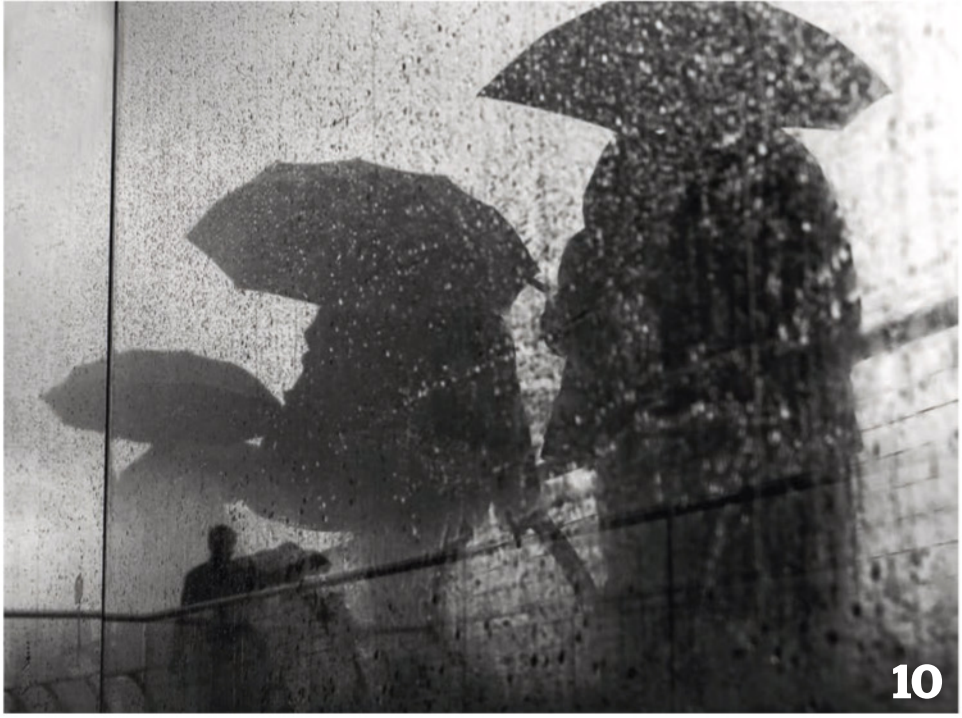
To see more images from APOY Round Ten and Young APOY, visit www.amateurphotographer.com/APOY

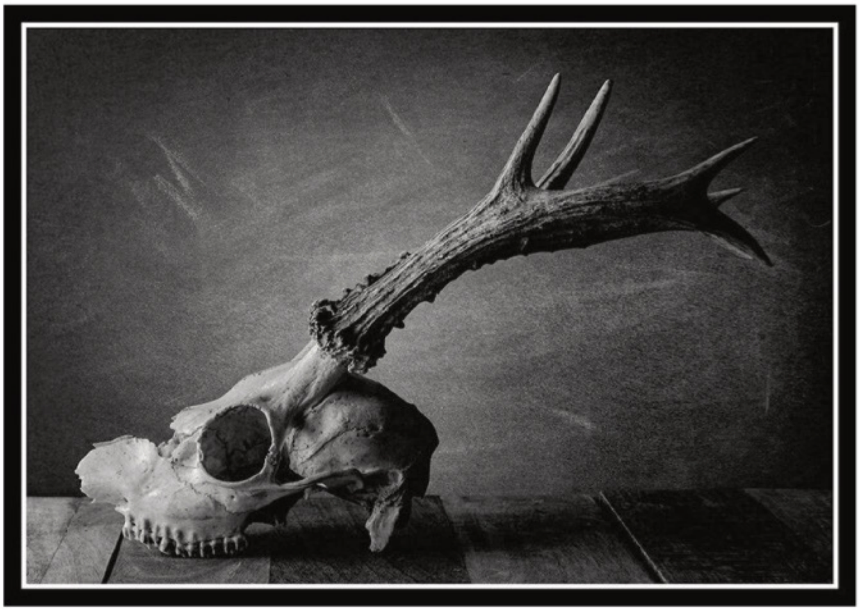


10 **Neil Johansson** UK 30pts

Canon PowerShot G5 X Mark II, 28mm, 1/3200sec at f/5, ISO 500

Like the opening scene from a 1940s film noir, this image leaves us imagining that some crime is about to be committed – and that Humphrey Bogart is about to enter stage left. The way in which it plays with scale, with the three umbrella silhouettes dwarfing the shadowy figure in the bottom left of the frame, manages to be compelling without being confusing. A hugely atmospheric photograph.

CAMERA CLUB COMPETITION



Steven Pinniger UK 10pts

Fujifilm X-T3, 16-55mm at 55mm, 1/125sec at f/11, ISO 160

We end this year's camera clubs competition with an image from a member of the runaway winners – Plymouth Camera Club. It's the creativity, ingenuity and skill of images such as Steven's that has propelled the club to the top of the leaderboard, allowing them to win by such an enormous margin. Huge congratulations go to all the members who took part. We look forward to seeing what everyone comes up with next year!

APOY 2024 IN ASSOCIATION WITH camera centre uk Adobe ViewSonic

The 2024 leaderboards

We are finally at the end of this year's APOY – and what a finish. After round nine, Lynn Fraser was in third place overall. Thanks to being awarded 60 points this round, she has ended up in first place and the overall winner. Congratulations to her, and to Sara Jazbar, who held on to the top spot for so long, only to be pipped at the last moment. In Young APOY, Lucy Monckton wins for the second time with her excellent and consistent approach, while Plymouth Camera Club are the runaway winners of our camera clubs category. Congratulations to all!

APOY

1	Lynn Fraser	280
2	Sara Jazbar	270
3	Matteo Strassera	240
4	Andrew Robertson	230
5=	Graeme Youngson	200
5=	Peyman Naderi	200
7	John Mihopulos	190
8	Gary Hunter	170
9	Dominic Beaven	155
10=	Jevgenijs Ščolokovs	150
10=	Julia Martin	150
10=	Stephanie Chadwick	150
10=	Tim Burgess	150

YOUNG APOY

1	Lucy Monckton	540
2	Yousef Naser	450
3	Finn Hanley	265
4	Matteo Botta	230
5	Omar Mahmoud Alashmawy	225
6	Antisha Thakur	210
7	Kaung Khant Thaw	180
8	Joseph Thomas	160
9	Liberty McAuley	150
10	Shadab Ishtiyak	130

CAMERA CLUBS

1	Plymouth Camera Club	620
2	Truro Camera Club	375
3	Launceston Camera Club	260
4=	Mid-Somerset Camera Club	250
4=	Visions Photography Club	250

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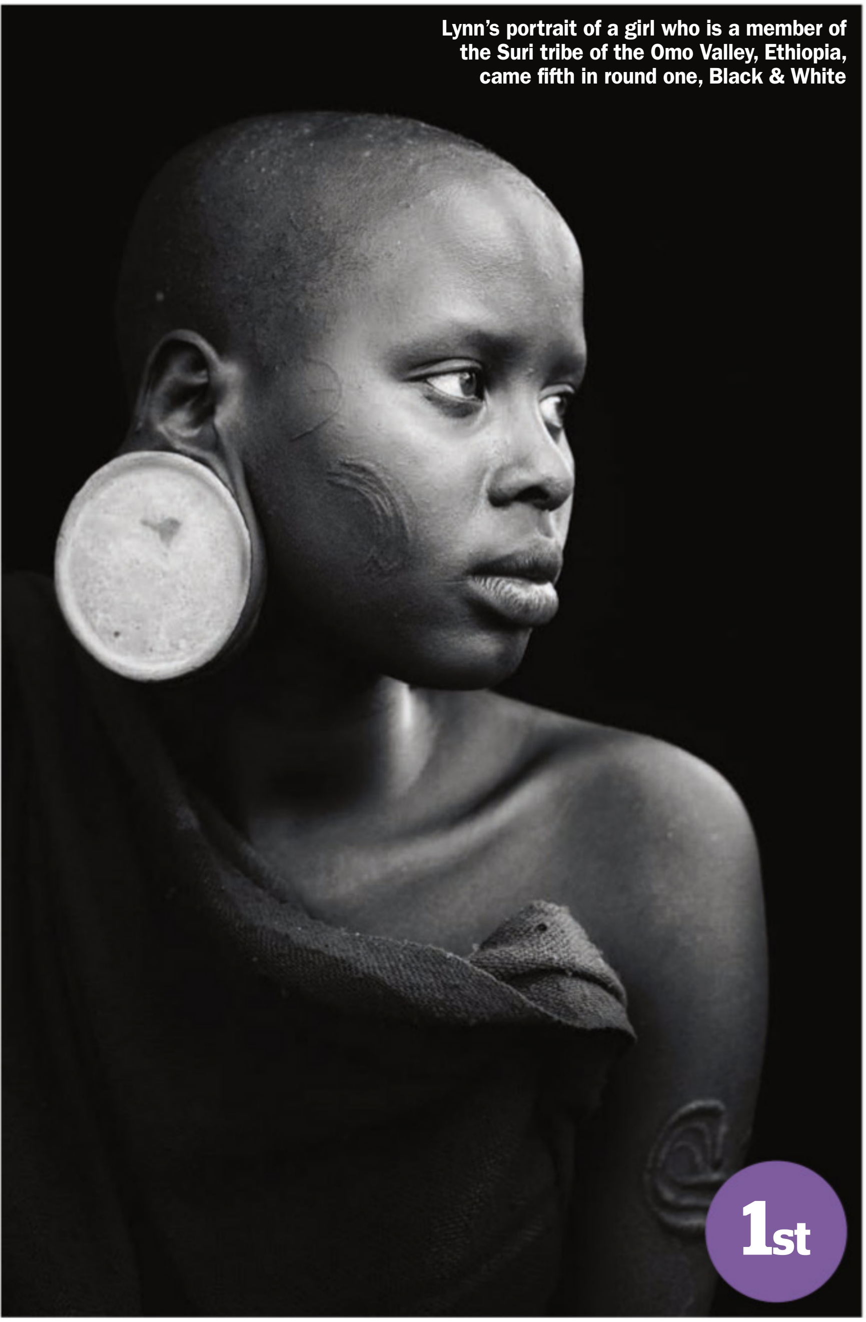
The APOY 2024 winners

This year's Amateur Photographer of the Year competition was particularly tightly fought. Here, and over the page, we present the winners...


Lynn's portrait of a girl who is a member of the Suri tribe of the Omo Valley, Ethiopia, came fifth in round one, Black & White

This year's prizewinner

Lynn Fraser, Scottish Highlands

Lynn Fraser is a former solicitor and until a couple of years ago also worked as an archaeologist. She now runs a fruit farm, farm shop and accommodation with her husband. Lynn first appeared in the APOY top ten in round two, and moved up and down the leaderboard over the ensuing rounds – right up until the final round, where her fifth-placed image earned her enough points to pip Sara Jazbar at the post by a mere ten points. Lynn came fifth in round one, Black & White, second in round nine, Travel, and was shortlisted in every other category. As has been demonstrated in previous years, it's this kind of consistency that can get you to the top.

Lynn Fraser tells us how she went about planning her entries for APOY

AP: How and when did you start taking pictures?
Lynn Fraser: I started taking pictures when I was given a Kodak Instamatic 100 as a child. There followed a series of point-and-shoot cameras, film and digital, until I got my first DSLR in 2011. I began to take my photography more seriously in 2014 and haven't looked back since.

AP: What inspires you?
LF: I'm inspired by anything that makes me curious.

AP: What are your favourite subjects?
LF: I really enjoy travel photography, which encompasses all sorts, and man-made objects in the landscape.

AP: How many times have you entered APOY and what have you learned from previous years?
LF: This is the second year that I have entered APOY; I came ninth overall last year. From last year's experience, I learned to enter images into every single category, regardless of the fact that I thought my images for some of the categories were much weaker than those for other categories.

AP: How did you go about planning your entries to this year's competition?

LF: I can be a bit scatty so I listed all the categories and their closing dates in a notebook along with notes of the images I thought would be suitable for each category. As many of my images could have been entered into several categories, and each image can only be entered in the competition once, I also thought about where they would potentially perform best.

AP: What did you feel were your stronger categories? And which were less strong?
LF: I felt that the people and travel categories were my strongest categories, and the macro and urban life less so. However, my results didn't necessarily reflect those thoughts, which shows you can't second-guess anything. But you only need one image to be shortlisted to earn points!

Taken in South Sudan, this shot was awarded second place in round nine, Travel

AP: What was your reaction when you learned that you had won?
LF: My first reaction was surprise, closely followed by delight.

AP: What advice would you give to anyone who is planning to enter APOY?
LF: I would encourage everyone to give it a go. It's a great exercise in curating your images. I would advise entering as many images as possible in all the categories because that gives the best chance of accumulating points. Don't enter what you think a judge will like, enter what you think fits the brief. And once your entries are in, forget about it!

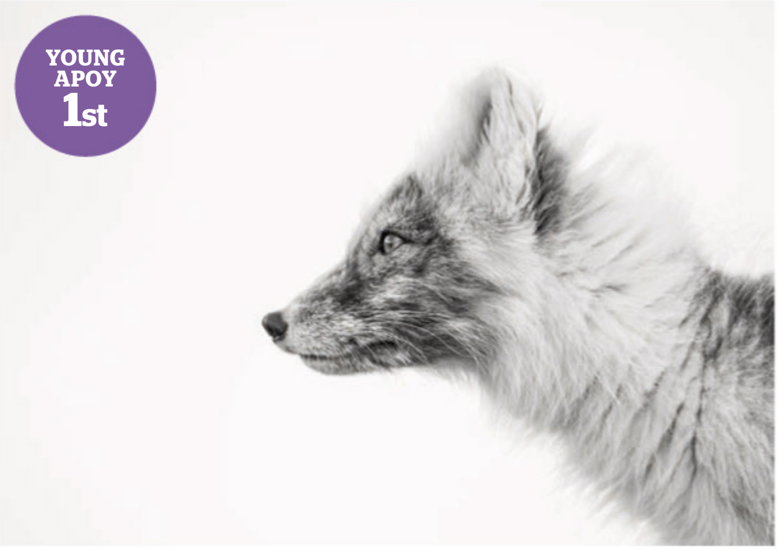
AP: What are you hoping to spend your prize voucher on?
LF: I bought a Canon EOS R5 last year but, so far, haven't been able to get any of the R lenses – so the voucher will most likely go towards a new lens.

AP: What are your plans for your photography over the coming year?
LF: In the short-term, I have a photo trip planned to Bangladesh and India in March. More generally, I would like to get out and about more often in my local landscape. Being based in the Highlands of Scotland I'm spoiled for choice for easily accessible, beautiful locations. Over the course of the year, I will be spending time in the Highland Print Studio in Inverness making some polymer photogravure prints with a view to collating them into a handmade book. I will also be participating in two exhibitions, one in London and one in Inverness. It's going to be a busy year and winning APOY is the best start possible.

You can see more of Lynn's images at **www.lynnfraserphotography.com**

This close-up of a stargazer lily was shortlisted in round seven, Macro

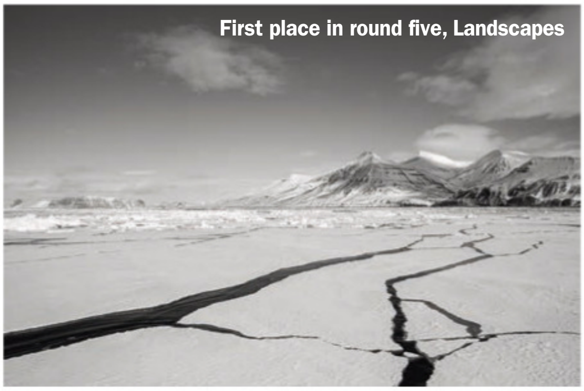
These telegraph poles in Scotland's Western Isles caught Lynn's eye, and the image was shortlisted in round five, Landscapes



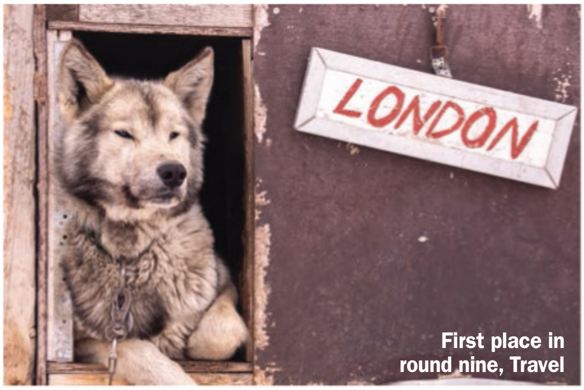
Lucy's portrait of an Arctic fox won round two, Animal Kingdom

Lucy Monckton, Staffordshire, UK

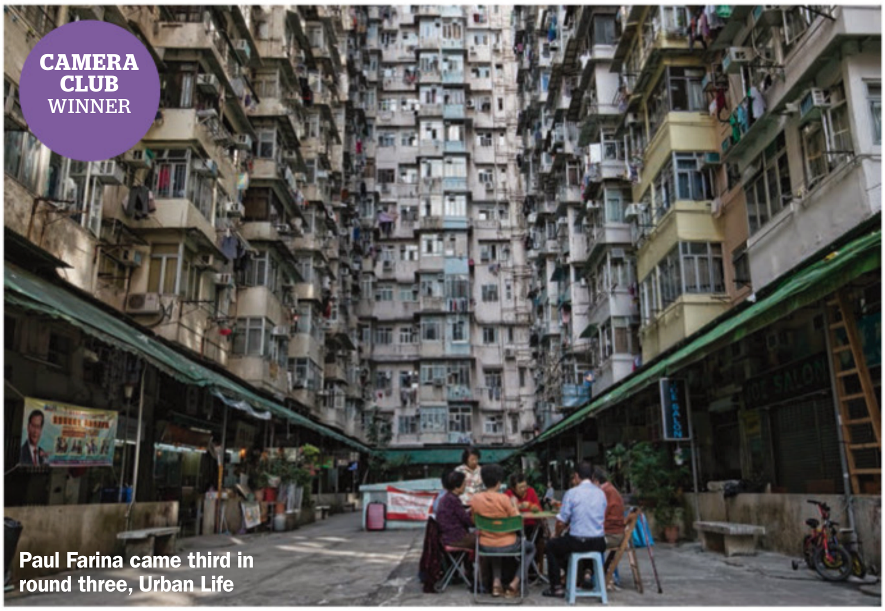
Lucy first came to our attention as the winner of Young APOY in 2021 – when she shared the prize with Muhammad Amdad of Bangladesh. Three years on, and she has come back to win it outright, with a 90-point lead over Yousef Naser (another previous winner). She won the Animal Kingdom, Landscapes, Macro and Travel rounds, and was placed in the top ten of three further rounds.



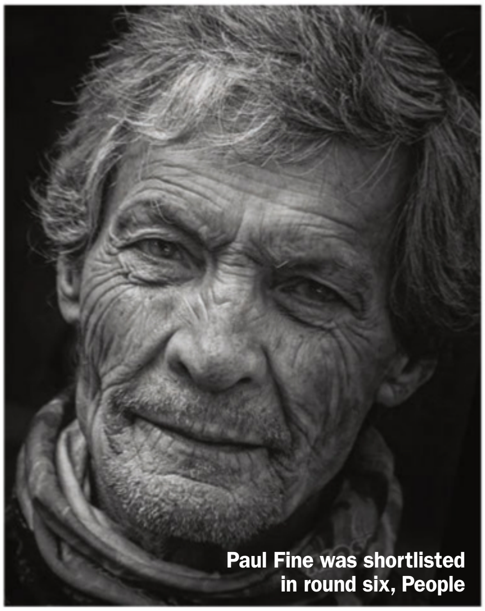
First place in round five, Landscapes



First place in round nine, Travel



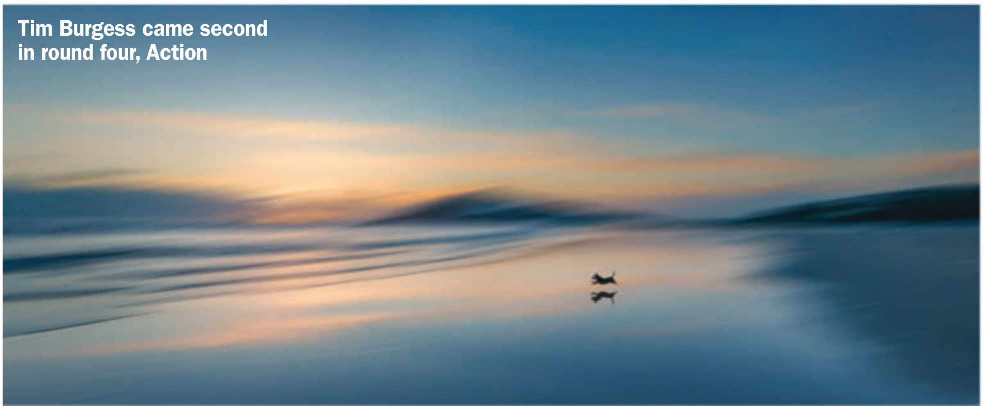
Paul Farina came third in round three, Urban Life



Paul Fine was shortlisted in round six, People

Plymouth Camera Club

For the past three years, Launceston Camera Club has run away with the Camera Clubs title in APOY, but this year there's a new kid on the block – Plymouth Camera Club. They went all out, with no fewer than 17 members regularly entering images. Overall, they accumulated an impressive 620 points – 245 ahead of their nearest rival, Truro Camera Club.



Tim Burgess came second in round four, Action

From the makers of *Amateur Photographer* magazine

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SECOND-HAND CLASSIC

Fujifilm X-T4

Succeeded by the X-T5, the X-T4 remains a stellar mirrorless camera and better still, all for less than £1,000

It might seem like it wasn't long ago that the X-T4 replaced the X-T3 in Fujifilm's popular X-T series, however it's a model that's soon to celebrate its fifth birthday. It's a camera that differed quite a bit from its predecessor with the introduction of in-body image stabilisation (IBIS), a fully articulated screen, uprated AF algorithms, larger battery with a 600-shot life, faster 15fps burst shooting, along with some minor tweaks to its marginally larger body. Behind the X-mount lies the same 26.1MP APS-C X-Trans CMOS 4 sensor as you'll find in the X-T3 with an identical ISO range of 160-12,800 (extendable to ISO 80-51,200). Other key features include twin card slots, in-camera USB-C charging, a shutter life expectancy of 300,000 cycles and a 0.5in, 3.69m-dot OLED electronic viewfinder. We rated it so highly that we went as far as saying it was the finest APS-C mirrorless camera ever made.

What we said

- 'The marginal increase in body size actually improves the handling characteristics of the camera'
- 'It's hard to think of any situation where the X-T4 would be found to be out of its depth'
- 'It would make a great choice for keen enthusiasts and professionals who are conscious of size and weight'

What to pay

You won't struggle to find second-hand examples. To buy one in 'Good' used condition with some signs of cosmetic wear you'll need to spend around £780. Pay £100 more and you'll get one in even better 'Excellent' condition. Used examples in 'Like New' condition tend to sell for around £925, while a VG-XT4 vertical grip costs £45 in 'Excellent' condition.

How it fares today

The X-T4 is a great way of entering into the X-series for less than you'd spend on an X-T5. Its AF system does an admirable job of keeping up with fast subjects and it handles and performs superbly with Fujifilm's prime lenses. It's disappointing the main menu can't be navigated using the touchscreen, which also isn't particularly responsive to light touches or when it gets wet.

New alternatives

With the Fujifilm X-T5 you get a very similar shooting experience as the X-T4, albeit with more speed, greater power, higher resolution (40MP BSI-CMOS sensor) and improved all-round performance. You also get a 160MP pixel shift mode, 1.84m-dot touchscreen, 6K video as well as animal eye AF tracking, vehicle tracking AF and human eye tracking.

See over to find out what Fujifilm X-T4 owners have to say

FUJIFILM
X-T4
FUJINON ASPHERICAL LENS
SUPER EBC XF 16-80mm 1:4 R OIS WR ø72
Amateur Photographer
Testbench
GOLD
★★★★★

Engaging the X-T4's silent electronic shutter can be used to shoot beyond the mechanical shutter's 1/8000sec limit up to 1/32,000sec. In addition, the electronic shutter permits faster burst shooting at up to 30fps with a 1.25x crop of the sensor

STILL
MOVIE
AF ON
AEL
MENU OK
DISP BACK

The switch below the shutter speed dial doesn't control the metering mode, but instead selects between stills and video shooting. It's a move that reflects the X-T line's increasing maturity as a video tool

At a glance

£889

body only (Excellent used condition)

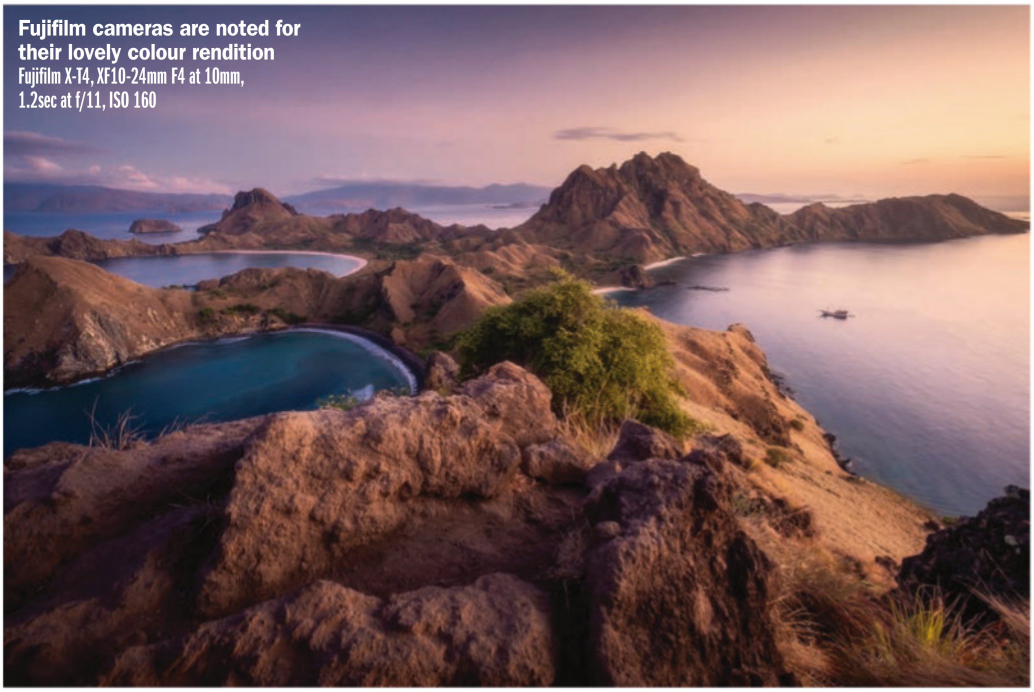
- 26.1MP APS-C X-Trans CMOS 4 sensor
- ISO 80-51,200 (extended)
- 0.5in, 3.69-million-dot EVF
- 3in, 1.62m-dot vari-angle touchscreen
- 4K 60fps video
- 607g (with battery and card)

For and against

- + Effective in-body image stabilisation
- + Responsive Face/Eye detection
- + 15fps continuous shooting
- + Battery stamina compared to previous X-T models
- − Menu can't be navigated by touch
- − Vari-angle screen design won't appeal to all users
- − Loses metering mode switch
- − Audio monitoring requires an adapter or the vertical grip

What the owners think

Three Fujifilm X-T4 users give their verdict



Fujifilm cameras are noted for their lovely colour rendition
Fujifilm X-T4, XF10-24mm F4 at 10mm, 1.2sec at f/11, ISO 160

Andrea Zangrando

The Fujifilm X-T4 has been my go-to camera for capturing the incredible moments of my adventures around the world. Its rugged, weather-sealed body is a game-changer. I've taken it through rainstorms in Scotland, dusty trails in Indonesia, and snowy peaks in the Dolomites without a hitch.

The camera's resistance to rain, dust and splashes means I never have to worry about the elements slowing me down. The intuitive dials for the shutter speed, ISO and exposure compensation make it so easy to adjust settings on the fly, even in challenging conditions.

The sensor produces breathtaking detail and vibrant colours, capturing everything from sweeping landscapes to intimate close-ups with remarkable clarity. Plus, the 5-axis in-body image stabilisation (IBIS) lets me shoot handheld with confidence, even in lower light or when I'm on the move. Lightweight yet built to last, the X-T4 is the perfect companion for any adventure, ensuring I never miss a moment. **Andrea can be followed on Instagram @andrea.zangrando**

For and against

- ✚ Wide dynamic range
- ▬ None that spring to mind

Nick Pope

Nick loves using his X-T4 with his manual Voigtländer lenses for street portraits
Fujifilm X-T4, Voigtländer 21mm f/3.5 1/210sec at f/3.5, ISO 320

I'm a passionate amateur photographer and a Fujifilm fan ever since I got my X100T. The X-T4 is my first interchangeable-lens Fujifilm camera, and I love it to bits. Photography has got to be fun and this is a fun camera to use, you just want to pick it up and take photos. It has great quality, it's so nice to hold, it has a beautiful tactile feel and the 'old school' dials on the top plate make it so easy to use.

My love is street portraits, and so I have to work quickly and let my subjects get on with the rest of their day, and I need to know where everything is at a glance. I love using manual focus lenses, especially my Voigtländer lenses, which complement the X-T4 to a tee. I always use the EVF, which is super-clear and presents all the information I need. But the rear screen is a little awkward.

I shoot in both JPEG and raw, and although I usually do a bit of post processing, the JPEGs are a great guide to how I want my final images. I really don't want another camera, as the X-T4 does everything I need. **Nick is on Instagram @nick.pphotos**

For and against

- ✚ Battery life
- ▬ Awkward flip screen

Dust and splash resistance lets you keep shooting in difficult conditions
Fujifilm X-T4, XF10-24mm F4 at 10mm, 1sec at f/13, ISO 160

Alexander Jonov

For me the Fujifilm X-T4 is a camera that allows you to get not only high-quality photos but also the pleasure of the shooting process itself. The main feature is its retro analogue controls, which are hardly convenient for professional work, but give an inexpressible feeling of using the camera. Fujifilm's flexible Film Simulation settings allow you to get excellent JPEGs, ideal when you don't want to edit raws.

It's nice to stroll around with the X-T4 both in the city and out and about in the countryside. The body feels quality and solid; it's the largest in the X-T series but to me it's the perfect size, it's comfortable in the hand even with large lenses. The swivel display criticised by the X-T3 fans is a better solution for me as I shoot through the viewfinder and the screen is covered 80 per cent of the time, requiring no extra protection. The autofocus isn't perfect, but overall, the X-T4 with a small 27mm f/2.8 lens makes for a great everyday camera.

Alexander finds the X-T4 to be his perfect everyday camera
Fujifilm X-T4, XF 23mm F1.4 R LM WR, 1/6400sec at f/1.4, ISO 640

More of Alexander's images can be viewed @alexander_jonov on Instagram

For and against
- ✚ Film Simulation profiles
- ▬ AF performance

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photo | video

Trustpilot
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based on over 65,000 reviews

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than just cameras

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CANON ZOOM LENS EF 24-70mm 1:2.8 L II USM
φ82mm
Canon

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and receive an
instant quote

Step 2
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gear in the UK for free

Step 3
We credit your Wex
account or send cash‡
direct to your
bank account

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Sigma 150-600mm f5-6.3 Contemporary DG OS HSM Lens for Canon EF	£450
Fujifilm XF 16-80mm f4 R OIS WR Lens	£230
Canon EF 50mm f1.4 USM Lens	£105
Sony FE 28-70mm f3.5-5.6 OSS Lens	£93

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Professor Newman on...

Simple rules for DOF

Professor Newman's five rules for how to get the best depth of field (and stop worrying about it so much)

This is the final article in my series on depth-of-field (DOF), inspired by AP reader Richard Sharp. Richard asked some quite technical questions, so the previous articles have been a deep dive into the technicalities. But it is likely that many people would like a simple summary of how those technicalities inform photographic practice, so that is the theme of this article.

Taken at f/4 on a full-frame camera. There is sufficient depth of field for this picture. Using a smaller aperture would have degraded sharpness and noise

Rule 1. Focus on the main subject of your composition. Traditional DOF practice suggests focusing on the hyperfocal distance to maximise depth of field. The problem with this practice is that only objects in the plane of focus are critically sharp. Given that in most images there is a 'subject', and that is what the viewer is likely to spend the most time looking at, it makes sense to ensure that this is what is sharpest. Further, modern autofocus cameras are very good at focusing on an object, but not so good at focusing on a predetermined distance.

Rule 2. Don't use too much depth of field. Additional DOF is gained by stopping down the aperture, which in turn creates more diffraction blur. Thus using more than is necessary results in images that are not optimally sharp. Many photographers use f/16 to ensure what they consider to be adequate depth of field. But at that setting, most lenses are producing less than half the resolution than they do at their optimum f-number. At the same time, f/16 set on a 50mm lens attached to a full-frame camera yields a DOF from 2.6m to infinity. In my experience there are very few compositions that require that extent of DOF.

Rule 3. Remember to take the sensor size of your camera into account. Many guides to depth-of-field are centred around full-frame cameras and are not appropriate for other sensor sizes. Using full-frame settings on a crop-sensor camera results in even more unnecessary DOF and the resultant additional diffraction blur. If provided with full-frame centric advice, the simple rule is to divide the suggested f-number by your crop factor. That is, if the advice suggests f/11 and you are using a Micro Four Thirds camera (crop factor 2), use f/5.6. With APS-C, use f/7.1.

Rule 4. Remember that depth of field also comes at the cost of image noise if you are shutter-speed limited. The reason for this is that the noisiness of an image ultimately depends on how much light energy was captured, which in turn depends on the exposure and the sensor size. Given the relationship between depth of field and sensor size given above, this means that when the shutter cannot be slowed any more, the image noise becomes dependent on the depth of field, whatever the sensor size. There is no escaping this by using different size sensors.

Rule 5. Don't worry about it too much. Shots are spoiled more frequently by missing the point of focus than by insufficient depth of field. A cynic might suggest that some photographers desire deep DOF to cover for focus errors. Yet modern cameras have very capable AF systems that will provide good focus in most circumstances. In the end, a photo that you actually took is likely to be better than one that you missed while worrying about depth of field.

One way that this rule might be applied is to spend a little time with a depth-of-field calculator getting an idea of the numbers given by different subject distance/focal length/f-number combinations for your camera. You'll then have an idea of how much DOF is available in different situations, which will probably be sufficient in most cases without detailed calculations.

Bob Newman is currently Professor of Computer Science at the University of Wolverhampton. He has been working with the design and development of high-technology equipment for 35 years and two of his products have won innovation awards. Bob is also a camera nut and a keen amateur photographer

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Full-frame DSLR bargains

You don't need to spend a fortune on full-frame! **Jon Stapley** scours the second-hand market to find the best deals on DSLRs

I read a quote recently that stuck with me. I can't quite remember who said it – either Confucius or some guy on Reddit – but the thrust of it was as follows: 'If the camera was good enough then, it's good enough now.'

About a decade ago, full-frame DSLRs ruled the roost. Professionals loved them, enthusiasts coveted them. And while these days they have been eclipsed by the rise of mirrorless, full-frame DSLRs are enjoying a spirited second life on the used market. After all, they took great pictures back then, and it's not like they've mysteriously lost the ability to take great pictures now.

Today, you can pick up a professional-grade full-frame DSLR for a fraction of what it would have originally cost, if you're willing to do a little hunting. I've put together this guide to help you find the best of the best – the full-frame DSLRs that I reckon are absolute bargains in 2025.

Ultimately, it's important to remember that people have been taking amazing pictures for decades, without the help of AI-powered subject-recognising autofocus and other such trappings of modernity. Whatever kind of photography or even video you plan to do, it's more than likely that a full-frame DSLR could be just the thing to help to achieve it.

Where to buy used DSLRs?

We'd always recommend sticking to reputable resellers when buying second-hand cameras. While you can find tempting prices through private-sale websites like eBay or Facebook Marketplace, there are risks involved. You'll have to do a lot more work to ensure the person you're buying from is on the level, checking their ratings from other users and their selling history. You'll have to inspect the photos of the product carefully to try to gauge whether it really is in as good a condition as they're claiming (needless to say, if there are no photos, do not buy).

There's also the matter of warranty. Reputable resellers almost always offer a limited warranty on used gear – usually between six months and a year, but sometimes more. This means you're covered in the event that problems develop or things don't work as they should. I speak from experience here – when I bought a used SLR from CameraWorld a few years ago, it developed a fault after about four months. This was comfortably within warranty, so I was able to drop it off to be fixed – for free! You won't get that from an eBay seller.

Here are the sellers we have used to compile this guide and check prices. All of them offer guarantees and warranties.

- Wex Photo Video (wexphotovideo.com)
- Clifton Cameras (cliftoncameras.co.uk)
- Castle Cameras (castlecameras.co.uk)
- CameraWorld (cameraworld.co.uk)
- Park Cameras (parkcameras.com)
- Grays of Westminster [Nikon only] (graysofwestminster.co.uk)
- Camera Jungle (camerajungle.co.uk)
- MPB (mpb.com)
- London Camera Exchange (lcegroup.co.uk)
- Harrison Cameras (harrisoncameras.co.uk)
- Jessops (jessops.com)

How to buy a used DSLR

Assuming you're buying from a reputable seller, a second-hand DSLR will be listed with a condition rating. Most sellers use single-word descriptors, though some like Wex Photo Video use a numerical scale. However, they will pretty much always cleave along roughly the following lines:

'Mint' / 'Like New' *Basically indistinguishable from a new camera.*

'Excellent' *Light signs of use, perhaps a few dust marks or nicks.*

'Good' *Noticeable signs of use, particularly in common wear places like the hotshoe.*

'Average' / 'Well used' *Significant signs of use, potential peeling paint or scratches on screen.*

'Poor' / 'Heavily used' *Lots of visible marks. Parts like socket covers could be missing. Best avoided.*

'Spares and repair parts' *A non-working camera.*

You should also see a DSLR listed with a shutter actuation count, which will likely be in the tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands. This is an estimate of how many times the shutter has been fired. Manufacturers give their DSLRs conservative minimum ratings of how many shutter actuations they reckon they're good for – it varies, but it's generally around 150,000 for entry-level to mid-range cameras, to around 300,000 for the high-end stuff.

But you don't need to take shutter actuations as gospel. If a camera is rated for 300,000 shutter actuations and it is estimated to have fired 299,999, it's not like it's going to fall apart the instant you fire the next one – most DSLRs last well beyond their stated lifespan. It's generally just useful as an extra sense-check for a camera's condition. If you see a DSLR listed as 'Like New' but its shutter has been fired 400,000 times, something might be a little hinky. Again, this is a reason to always buy from a reputable seller offering a good warranty on used gear.

Full-frame DSLRs under £400

Canon EOS 5D Mark II

Key specs:

- 21.1MP sensor
- Canon EF lens mount
- 3.9fps continuous shooting
- Full HD 30p video

The Canon EOS 5D Mark II is a legend. Released in 2008, it wasn't the first DSLR to shoot video, but it was the first full-frame DSLR to shoot Full HD video. This, coupled with its excellent low-light performance and broad selection of affordable large-aperture lenses, meant it was enthusiastically adopted by filmmakers across the spectrum, including large-scale TV and Hollywood productions.

It's not just a video camera though – the EOS 5D models have long been favoured workhorses among Canon-using pros. The 5D II's feature-set may sound basic, with 21MP and a 3.9fps burst rate, but it can produce excellent images, with good dynamic range and pleasing colours. Autofocus is its Achilles' heel, with a 9-point system that didn't feel like much to write home about at the time.

However, the 5D Mark II has an ace in the hole: the ease with which you can pick one up on the cheap. Used models are widely available, largely because every filmmaker and their mum bought one and then traded it in when the 5D Mark III came out. This has kept the price down to sensible levels, and there's that wide selection of cheap Canon EF lenses too. I'd go so far as to say the EOS 5D Mark II is the best full-frame DSLR bargain for most people. The main exception is if you plan to shoot fast-moving subjects such as sports or wildlife.

How much will it cost?

The EOS 5D Mark II is widely available across practically all the reputable retailers. Expect to pay £250-330 for one in 'Good' or 'Excellent' condition, and that's for a camera that cost some £2,250 on release.

Nikon D700

Key specs:

- 12.1MP sensor
- Nikon F lens mount
- 5fps continuous shooting (8fps with battery pack)
- No video

Nikon's stolid D700 has been enjoying something of a renaissance in recent years, with a clutch of retrospective reviews published calling it 'timeless', 'a classic', 'still everything you need' and things of that nature. There's a Facebook group called 'Nikon D700 / The Legend' with more than 18,000 members at time of writing.

It's a popular camera for a reason. The headline resolution of 12.1MP may sound absurdly low by today's standards, but look past that and this is a very modern-feeling camera in a lot of respects. It's got a 51-point autofocus system that delivers the goods in terms of speed and accuracy, with capable 3D Tracking; it certainly knocks the stuffing out of the EOS 5D Mark II in this respect. The image quality is also full of character, with great tonal depth, large dynamic range and richly rendered colours. The body itself is fully weather-sealed – it's a true outdoor camera, and a brilliant one for landscape shooters.

The D700 unavoidably shows its age in some areas. There's no video mode – I know some of you won't care, but some will – and there's also no option to use live view autofocus. More significantly perhaps, the D700 only has a single card slot, and it's the outdated CompactFlash format.

How much will it cost?

The D700 offers great second-hand value, with 'Good' and 'Excellent' examples available for around £300, particularly at MPB. If you're willing to accept 'Average' condition then I've seen it go as low as £199, which is outstanding value. LCE is a good place to start looking.

Nikon D610

Key specs:

- 24.3MP sensor
- Nikon F lens mount
- 6fps continuous shooting
- Full HD 30p video

A solid all-rounder of a camera, the Nikon D610 is an excellent on-ramp to full-frame photography. It performs well in low light, thanks in part to the intelligent noise reduction system. Its continuous shooting speeds are good enough for most purposes, and while the 39-point autofocus system feels a little bit dated, it's still pretty capable, with a solid 3D tracking performance. Dynamic range is generally very good – more-expensive models like those in our next section will probably give you more recoverable detail in the highlights, but there's realistically not a lot in it.

With dual card slots and a lightweight build, the Nikon D610 can be considered to be an excellent mid-range camera – an ideal way to trade-up if you've learned the ropes on a DX-format Nikon DSLR such as one of the D3000 series.

How much will it cost?

The Nikon D610 is plentifully available from various retailers, and if you want one that's in 'Good' to 'Excellent' condition, then you're looking at spending between £270 and £330.

Nikon D3

Key specs:

- 12.1MP sensor
- Nikon F lens mount
- 9fps continuous shooting
- No video

The sports star of yesteryear, the chunky Nikon D3 landed in 2007. If you're looking to capture fast-paced subjects and you don't mind a fairly low resolution of 12.1MP then I'd say that definitely, the D3 is well worth considering. It's still a decently fast shooter, with a 9fps burst rate that should be enough for any half-competent user to bag their subject – this can even be upped to 11fps without sequential metering or AF tracking. Autofocus keeps up well too, with it offering 15 cross-type sensors and 36 horizontal sensors.

A note on video: there isn't any. The D3 doesn't shoot video. Google's stupid 'AI summary' says it can but – surprise, surprise – it's wrong. Some people have used its burst mode to create cool stop-motion, but that's it. The updated Nikon D3S can shoot 720p video, though that'll cost you an extra £100 to £150, and if video is any kind of priority, there are much more efficient ways to spend that money.

How much will it cost?

For a Nikon D3 in 'Good' to 'Excellent' condition, you're looking at between £280 and £390. MPB has plenty at the time of writing, and Harrison Cameras has a couple.

Canon EOS 6D

Key specs:

- 20.2MP sensor
- Canon EF lens mount
- 4.5fps continuous shooting
- Full HD 30p video

This is one of the lightest full-frame DSLRs ever, to the point where some users prefer ones with a bit more heft. But if travelling light is a priority for you, the Canon EOS 6D should be high on your list of potential buys. Ergonomically it's lovely to use, and produces luscious images with its 20.2MP sensor. It has built-in Wi-Fi and GPS, another big tick for travel shooters; and there's a near-silent shooting mode.

There's the option to shoot Full HD video too – though the EOS 5D Mark II would be a better buy if you're bothered about video. Image quality holds out well throughout the ISO range, only really starting to deteriorate after ISO 6400, which puts night-time photography in play as long as you have a lens with a decent aperture. The autofocus though is pretty rudimentary, an 11-point system that is put to shame by similarly priced Nikon rivals.

How much will it cost?

Prices for the EOS 6D tend to cluster between £280 and £350 for 'Good' condition or better. It's very widely available, too, with plentiful options currently listed on MPB, Wex, Park Cameras, Harrison, CameraWorld – I could go on. Suffice to say, you won't have trouble getting hold of it.

Canon EOS 5D

Key specs:

- 12.8MP sensor
- Canon EF lens mount
- 3fps shooting
- No video

This is your ultra-cheap option. For most users, I'd recommend having another root down the back of the sofa and seeing if you can scrape together enough for the EOS 5D Mark II. It offers almost double the resolution, Full HD video (as opposed to no video), SD card compatibility rather than outdated CompactFlash and superior ergonomics. But if you simply must have full-frame, and can't spend over £199, this is the way to go.

And, you know what? The Canon EOS 5D is still a darn charming camera! It offers lovely image quality with pleasingly rich colours (though you won't know it until you get home, as the 2.5in LCD is pretty horrible). The resolution may sound low, but it was enough for a double-page magazine spread back in the day (trust us, we know), and it's good enough now. There are a few mod cons missing, such as Auto ISO, so you will simply have to remember to set the ISO yourself. Art from adversity and all that.

How much will it cost?

You can get one in 'Good' condition for as little as £154, and even if you get the most minty-fresh EOS 5D you can find, you're still unlikely to spend more than £199. And that, frankly, is a bargain.

Camera to avoid: Nikon D600

When browsing second-hand camera listings, there's one full-frame DSLR you'll see quite frequently, and often at seemingly tempting prices, and that's the Nikon D600. Released in 2012, this enthusiast DSLR sports 24.2MP and was initially priced at around £1,995. These days you can pick it up in top condition for around £230-300. Sounds good, right?

However, I'd recommend steering clear. The D600 attracted an infamous controversy shortly after release when users started to notice black spots on their images, which turned out to be caused by dust accumulation on the sensor. While Nikon rushed to offer free service and repair to any users affected, regardless of warranty, things got bad enough that the Chinese government actually ordered Nikon to stop selling the camera, forcing a recall.

The Nikon D610 (featured above, opposite page) was rather hastily released the following year, being essentially the same camera with the dust issue corrected. It costs a little more than the D600 on the second-hand market, but is unquestionably the better buy.

Full-frame DSLRs under £700

Canon EOS 5D Mark III

Key specs:

- 22.3MP sensor
- Canon EF lens mount
- 6fps continuous shooting
- Full HD 30p video

Given that the EOS 5D Mark II was a huge hit, a successor was inevitable. The EOS 5D Mark III arrived in 2012 with improvements across the board, especially in terms of its ergonomics, with a control layout resembling that of the popular APS-C EOS 7D line. The ISO range is improved compared to the Mark II, the continuous shooting is faster, there's an extra card slot, and perhaps most significantly of all, you get the 61-point focus system from the sports-focused EOS-1D X cameras, which is a whole lot better than the Mark II's rather antiquated system.

Let's not forget about video, given that the EOS 5D Mark II kickstarted a video revolution and all. While the EOS 5D Mark III offers the same headline specs of Full HD 30p, it does gain ergonomic improvements such as a headphone socket for audio monitoring.

Ultimately, the decision just comes down to your budget. The EOS 5D Mark III is better than the EOS 5D Mark II in pretty much every way you can think of, but it also consistently costs around £100 to £200 more. It could be more economical to opt for the cheaper camera and plough the difference into a lens.

How much will it cost?

Like its older sibling, the EOS 5D Mark III is widely available. You won't have any trouble finding one for somewhere between £400 and £500, depending on condition.

Nikon D750

Key specs:

- 24.3MP sensor
- Nikon F lens mount
- 6.5fps continuous shooting
- Full HD 60p video

While it perhaps doesn't quite have the nostalgic charm of the previous Nikon D700, the Nikon D750 is, y'know, better. A powerful and dependable camera for the majority of shooting situations, the D750 benefits from Nikon's Multi-Cam 3500 II autofocus module that delivers broad AF-point coverage and excellent tracking, especially when paired with an appropriately fast lens. Live view focusing isn't great though – Canon's DSLRs have it beat there thanks to the introduction of the superior Dual Pixel AF system. This was an issue Nikon would go on to address with the subsequent D780, an excellent DSLR that is generally priced above our budget (though I have seen the odd one in 'Good' condition for less than £700 at MPB).

The D750 puts in a good showing for video. It's not 4K, but Full HD mode offers a 60p frame rate, and there are also lots of video-friendly bells and whistles on the camera. There's both a microphone port and a headphone port, as well as a useful zebra patterning function to guard against clipped highlights. There's also the option to shoot with a flat picture profile, though it's not a proper Log profile – this was a few years before that became commonplace.

How much will it cost?

Prices for decent condition on the Nikon D750 start at around £540. There are good prices available at Wex at the time of writing, and if you want to push up to 'Excellent' condition you're looking at somewhere between £570 and £615 – MPB has plenty.

Nikon D810

Key specs:

- 36.2MP sensor
- Nikon F lens mount
- 5fps continuous shooting
- Full HD 60p video

The Nikon D850, released in 2017, was quite possibly the greatest DSLR that will ever be made. It blended high-resolution imaging with super-fast shooting speeds, resulting in a do-everything camera that pros still use today. Its precursor, the Nikon D810, came out in 2014 and still offers a lot of what made that camera great while being a good deal cheaper on the second-hand market.

With 36.2MP of resolution to play with, the D810 offers generous latitude for cropping and printing. Its magnesium-alloy body is tough enough for prolonged outdoor work, and its dual card slots give you plenty of space to fill up with high-res shots. I would definitely take a used D810 over the previous D800 or D800E – the cost is similar, and the difference is pronounced.

If you're foremost a stills photographer and it's within your budget, the Nikon D810 is an easy recommend. It's tough, it's capable and it works brilliantly. For video it's fine, but you can get better value elsewhere – it offers decent Full HD, but you can get 4K for the same money.

How much will it cost?

The Nikon D810 is plentifully available from between £540 and £650 for 'Good' condition or better – Park Cameras and MPB have stacks of them. If you're willing to chance 'Average' condition then you could go below £499; Wex has a couple at the time of writing.

Canon EOS 6D Mark II

Key specs:

- 26.2MP sensor
- Canon EF lens mount
- 6.5fps continuous shooting
- Full HD 60p video

The charming Canon EOS 6D Mark II is everything that the original EOS 6D was – a lightweight camera offering near-professional performance to the enthusiast and the advanced amateur. Decent resolution meets Canon's Dual Pixel autofocus system, which makes live view focusing a much more pleasant experience, which is especially useful for video as well as stills. Complementing this, you get a fully articulating LCD screen into the bargain.

Despite its somewhat plasticky feeling body, the EOS 6D Mark II is weather-sealed and equipped for outdoor shooting. You could argue that it doesn't particularly excel at any one thing, but it also isn't notably bad at anything. It's an absolute textbook all-rounder, and really the only major ding against it is that its popularity has kept the second-hand price relatively high – this is one of the most expensive cameras on our list at time of writing.

How much will it cost?

As mentioned, it's at the upper end of our budget, but it's still eminently doable – Canon EOS 6D Mark II DSLRs in 'Good' and 'Excellent' condition tend to sit pretty consistently between £669 and £699. Park Cameras has loads of them.

Nikon D4

Key specs:

- 16.2MP sensor
- Nikon F lens mount
- 11fps continuous shooting
- Full HD 30p video

The Nikon D4 is a tank. A rough and tumble pro camera that just shoots and shoots, it's brilliant if you're looking to take it into tough conditions. D4's have been to war zones, been through sandstorms and pelted with hail, and come up still shooting. Burst rate is fast and the body is ergonomically sound, with loads of physical control buttons. Plus its AF performs very well even when the light levels fall.

A note on memory – the Nikon D4 has two slots: one is CompactFlash and the other is XQD. XQD has been eclipsed by CFexpress, and unfortunately there has been no firmware update issued to enable CFexpress compatibility like there was with subsequent cameras such as the D5 or Z6. You can still easily buy the required card types, though.

How much will it cost?

Now, this one is a trickier ask than the likes of the EOS 5D Mark II, which is all but falling off the shelves at this point. But if you keep your ear to the ground, you can get hold of a D4 in decent condition for £600 to £700. At time of writing, Wex and Park have D4 listings in this price bracket. Also, with this camera, I'd be a lot more comfortable taking a chance on a lower condition rating, since (as mentioned) it is a tank.

Canon EOS 5DS

Key specs:

- 50.6MP sensor
- Canon EF lens mount
- 5fps continuous shooting
- Full HD 30p video

This was released in 2015 as a duo with the essentially identical EOS 5DS R. Used versions of the 5DS R are routinely priced in four figures, but no matter: the EOS 5DS was and is pretty special. Offering sky-high resolution, it's incredible for producing lush prints of your work, or cropping in significantly without losing detail. In the time before Fujifilm turned the medium format world on its head with the GFX series, it was seen as a viable alternative to medium format systems, which were clunky and expensive.

It's not particularly speedy and it suffers badly at high ISOs. But ultimately, it's all about that monster resolution, and this is some of the most resolution you can get for your dollar right now.

How much will it cost?

Like the D4, this might require a little more hunting and pouncing than other cameras on this list if you're going to stay within budget. However, at time of writing, I can see 'Good' and 'Excellent' condition EOS 5DS DSLRs at MPB and Wex for £600-700. I even spotted one at gaming/electronics reseller CeX, though after what those cowboys offered for me for my PlayStation 4, I'm disinclined to send them your business.

Um... where's Pentax?!

Some of you loyal Pentaxians may have flicked through these pages straight away and observed that we haven't featured any Pentax DSLRs. But, before you write a strongly worded missive to the Official AP Reader Complaints Inbox, let me explain that this isn't meant as a slight against Pentax, which makes excellent DSLRs with unique features and functions.

However we had two criteria for this feature – we wanted full-frame DSLRs, and ones that could be picked up for less than £700. Pentax just doesn't have anything within those brackets. Its first full-frame DSLR, the K-1, is holding steady at £800-900 from reputable sellers. Even if you roll the dice on eBay, you're looking at about £750 for decent condition.

If you really want Pentax and don't mind compromising on full-frame, our technical editor Andy Westlake has two recommendations for cameras with APS-C sensors. There's the capable K-3 Mark II, which goes for £500-600. Or, for something ultra-cheap, the K-5 Mark II gives you 16MP of resolution for as little as £149 – for more about it, see our feature on the best sub-£300 cameras on page 75.

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Revitalise your photography

Has your photo mojo gone walkabout and your creativity down in the doldrums? Are you suffering from gear overload? **Will Cheung** has plenty of ideas on hand to help reignite your passion and streamline your kit

It's a quiet time of the year so the perfect opportunity to take stock of your photography and look towards the future. What photo projects to embrace, locations to visit, new creative challenges and what's in your camera bag and what you might need (or not need!) to fulfil your ambitions.

Photography is an expensive hobby and how much you spend is entirely up to you, your budget and your aspirations. If you can afford top-end cameras and fast-aperture glass, good luck to you and enjoy the kit. Yet you can have as much fun and gain even more satisfaction by keeping things simple, by making the most of what you have and budgeting wisely.

Hands up if you suffer from GAS (gear acquisition syndrome), a common affliction among keen photographers and nothing to be ashamed of. It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that extra kit will help you achieve great things. Speaking from personal experience, some blame must go to influencers constantly promoting the latest kit on social media. GAS is also fuelled by technology and the opportunities it brings. For stills, more resolution, better AF skills, faster continuous shooting and features such as pre-capture have photographers reaching for their credit cards. If shooting video appeals, the camera is just a small cog in the imaging chain. You also need a gimbal, microphone, lighting, more memory and a powerful computer, and the list goes on.

It's not easy, especially if your photo interests are broad, because you need different kit to cover all eventualities. Being an enthusiast with a broad range of photo interests can potentially mean a cupboard full of kit. However, perhaps this period of contemplation will help you funnel down your outfit to what you actually use rather than what you want or what you think you need. You could be sitting on a load of expensive kit that you haven't used for a year or more that you could sell to pay for a trip, invest in a printer or to fund something that you will use.

After reading this feature, you are unlikely to make any big decisions in a hurry and that is perfectly fine. However, what it might do is encourage you to consider your kit, photo aims and objectives, and we have a few ideas to help in these cash-strapped times.

Enjoy legacy lenses

Mirrorless cameras have many advantages and one that is not promoted by the manufacturers is the fact that doing away with the reflex mirror mechanism has resulted in thinner bodies. The practical upside of this is the ability to fit SLR lenses on mirrorless bodies and retain infinity focus.

Back when SLRs ruled the earth, yes it was often possible to fit lens A on body B but with a few exceptions, you could not focus on infinity, so it was all rather pointless. Now, that is not an issue so if you have a dusty old lens in the cupboard, or picked up a cheap optic at the local charity shop or you want to use some classic glass on your mirrorless body, you can. Yes, there are some logistics to deal with but using legacy lenses that were designed for film and not super-high-resolution sensors, can give images a character all of their own. It's a great way of giving your pictures an individual look.

So, if this way of shooting appeals, do a web search for lens adapters for your proposed camera/lens combination. Brands to look out for include K&F, Meike, SRB, Urth and Viltrox, with prices from £25 upwards.

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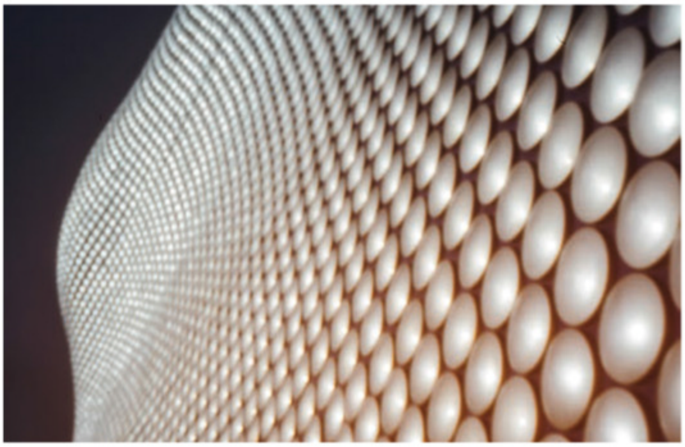
A Nikon 70-200mm f/2.8 was used on a Fujifilm GFX 50R for this out-of-camera desaturated, vignetted poppy shot

The Urth Canon RF to Nikon F mount costs £59/$55 and it's seen here paired up with a Nikon 20mm f/3.5 lens purchased new in 1981. It was a decent lens in its day and works well with digital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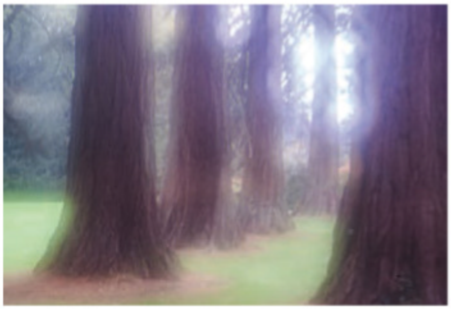
Left: Embrace soft pictures, sensor dust specks, and flare by shooting digital pinhole. It's cheap, fun and very easy

Below: Shooting pinhole produces images that do not look like photos, which is a big part of its appeal

A passion for pinhole

You can make a pinhole camera from a Pringles tube, biscuit bin or even a wheelie bin but what we're talking about here is using your digital camera. All you need is a body cap and a laser-drilled pinhole lens (do a web search to source suppliers) or make your own and after a few minutes of DIY, you're ready to start shooting.

Pinhole lenses have small f-stops and that can mean slow shutter speeds and a tripod. However, you can enjoy the freedom of the handheld approach. With the digital cameras having good high ISO performance you can just set a fast speed and shoot handheld and any noise generated will only add to the low-tech results. The small f-stop also means plenty of depth-of-focus (the amount of sharpness on the sensor side of the lens) so any dust and specks on your sensor will show and that only enhances the primitive feel of your shots; but of course you can retouch any flaws if your preference is for a clean look.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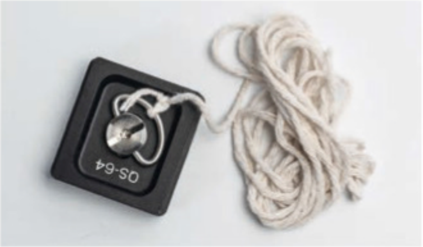
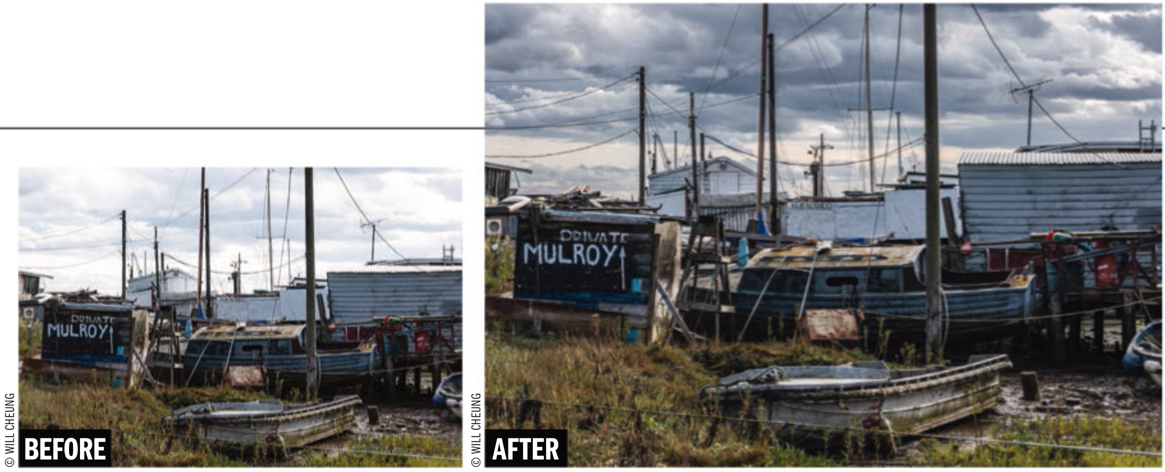
Enjoy digital pinhole shooting on the cheap with a laser drilled pinhole, shown here mounted on a Canon EOS R body cap



Cheap DIY tricks

With the incredible performance of in-body and lens-based image stabilisers, you can get sharp handheld shots at 1/2sec or 1sec depending on the focal length and conditions. Enhance your handholding skills further by attaching a piece of string to a tripod plate and fixing this to the camera as normal, and at the other end make a loop for your foot and adjust this so the string is taut when the camera is held at its usual shooting position. When shooting with slower shutter speeds, pulling gently against will help achieve sharp shots at even slower shutter speeds than usual.

If you enjoy close-up photography, the backing card you find in packs of smoked salmon can help you direct light to where it is needed. The card is either silver or gold backed and can be left in your camera bag.



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Use a ND graduated filter on the lens to darken the sky and it would also darken the boat masts which would look strange. Using Adobe Lightroom Classic's masking skills to select and darken the sky was the simple solution

Add filters in software

Deciding when and which filters to use is part of the craft of photography and there's something wonderfully involving about the entire process.

However, while it's great waxing lyrical about camera filters, the reality is that an extensive filter system is a considerable investment and adds bulk to your backpack. Not only that but even the most ardent filter user won't have their kit with them all the time.

The alternative is obvious: add filter effects in editing. Yes, it's true that while the process isn't as satisfying, there are considerable advantages. It's free because you already own or subscribe to the software, there's no additional kit to lug around, effects can be added, changed or totally removed, multiple filter effects can be achieved and there's precise control in a way that you don't have with physical filters. For example, use a ND graduated filter on a scenic featuring a horizon broken up by a few tall trees, and the filter will darken the trees as well as the sky so the effect can look odd. You might use a soft ND to lessen this but then the impact of the sky is less significant. In software, there are no such issues. Indeed, with the latest software such as Adobe's Lightroom Classic, accurately masking the sky is done with a single mouse click and then you alter density, saturation and colour with alacrity.

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Left: Taken with the Mitakon Speedmaster 65mm f/1.4 at its maximum aperture on a Fujifilm GFX 50R. Its soft image rendering gives an atmosphere of its own

Take the manual option

Usable body-integral autofocus arrived with the Minolta 7000, a mere four decades ago. Since then, AF has done nothing but improve, and with the latest systems boasting eye and subject detect and the ability to track challenging subjects such as birds in flight we are, to be honest, spoilt and perhaps it's time to take a step back in time and enjoy getting hands-on with focusing.

Legacy lenses with an adapter is one way of going manual, but another is the legion of manual focus lenses that are available at almost every price level for all camera mounts including Canon EOS RF. As a guide, at the lower end of the price scale are brands such as 7artisans, Meike, TTartisans and Yongnuo; further up the price scale are Laowa, Lomography, Mitakon, Sirui and Viltrox; and at the top end we have Voigtländer, Zeiss, and Meyer Optik.

The manual focus market has some fascinating optics such as those featured here. The Laowa 15mm f/2 Zero-D at £679/ $649 is a super-fast ultra-wide; the Voigtländer Nokton 75mm f/1.5 at £849 /$849 is ideal for portraits with great bokeh; and the TTArtisan Tilt 50mm f/1.4 offers camera movements and is remarkable value at £249/$199

© WILL CHEUNG

The Lensbaby Composer give you the chance to mix sharp focus and swirly blur

Creative accessories

Another manual lens option to check out is the Lensbaby family. With a range of creative options and available in popular lens mounts, invest in the product that suits the look you want to achieve. The Composer Pro II with the Sweet 50 Optic for Nikon Z mount sells at £300 while the Lensbaby Velvet 56mm f/1.8 is £449 for the Canon RF mount.

LENSBABY
Velvet 56mm f/1.6

Above: Sweet 50

Left: Lensbaby Velvet

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Could you have a small fortune hiding away somewhere in your loft?

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Cold hard cash

Want to free up some money to buy some new gear? **Amy Davies** shows you a number of ways to get rid of your old stuff...

We can all be guilty of stockpiling old bits of tech in our houses, keeping them for the 'just in case' moment when you might need them.

Or you might simply assume that your old cameras, lenses and smartphones aren't really worth that much and so have never got round to getting rid.

However, not only can you free up a hefty chunk of change by having a root around your cupboards, you'll also be doing a good thing for the environment by getting all that unused tech back into circulation.

There will of course be times when your old gear really is past it and is unsellable. But you should still try to dispose of it responsibly, where possible. Lots of retailers offer recycling schemes, and you can also check with your local council about what they might accept at your nearest refuse centre. Many of the components of electronics can be extracted and re-used to prevent rare earth materials from being lost forever.

You might also want to consider donating items to your local charity shop – if they accept electronics. Don't use these shops as a place to get rid of broken or faulty equipment, though; only donate if it's in good working order and the shop can reasonably expect to sell it.

If you're not quite sure where else to begin when it comes to getting rid of your old junk – which is in all likelihood someone else's treasure – then that's where we come in.

There's a variety of avenues you can go down, from private selling via online marketplaces, to trading it in with one of the many reselling sites that now exist.

Whichever route you take, think about ways you can maximise the cash you make. Are there accessories you can bundle with the gear you've got? Can you present it in its best possible state? Is it worth repairing something which may be broken before you resell it?

You might find you're amazed by how much cash you can generate just by having a spring clean, so what are you waiting for – see what you've got lying around and get selling.

Do I need to pay tax?

New rules mean that online platforms need to tell HMRC if someone makes over £1,700 in a year, or completes 30 transactions.

This has got some people worried that using online marketplaces to shift unwanted old gear could have tax implications.

But, there are clear exemptions if you are simply selling old personal items that you no longer require. Although HMRC will have to be notified if you do manage to clear out your loft and be quids in, you almost certainly won't have to pay for the privilege.

In short, if you're not making a profit, you have nothing to worry about. If, however, you get the selling bug and start buying up old tech to sell on, then you will have to declare it – but remember, everyone gets a £1,000 (profit) tax-free trading allowance, so you may still be in the clear when the tax man comes calling.

Once you've had a root around your attic, cupboards, kitchen drawers and anywhere else tech tends to find itself hidden away, then what?

If you're a bit of a traditionalist, you might consider taking your gear to a car-boot sale, or popping into your local camera shop and seeing if they'll take it off your hands.

Both are good options, but there are even more online opportunities you can explore too.

Online marketplaces

Sites such as eBay, Gumtree and Facebook Marketplace allow you to make a private sale to another individual. You may find that you get the most money when selling via this route, but it's not without its problems.

In order to get the best results from these sites, it pays to do your homework beforehand. Take a look at 'sold' or 'completed' listings to see how much you can reasonably expect to make.

Also consider what condition your item is in, and whether you can improve things somewhat – you'll be amazed by the difference a good clean makes, especially when you need to take pictures of your item.

If the product is damaged or faulty in some way, you must declare it. However, you could also consider getting it repaired before putting it up for sale – if the price of the repair outweighs the uplift in price you can expect to get for it damaged. If you're able to repair it yourself, then even better.

To boost the value of your item, think about whether there are any accessories you no longer use that you could potentially chuck in to bolster the price. Perhaps an old bag that's no longer in use, or even something simple like a spare charging cable or memory card.

You'll need to create a listing to sell your item. It's pretty simple to do that these days, with many of the online marketplaces walking you through it step by step. You can use your smartphone to do it, using it to take pictures if you like, too.

My advice here is to take lots of pictures, showing off the product from multiple angles clearly. Take the pictures in good light against a neutral or uncluttered background, making sure they're in focus and they show off all the relevant buttons and controls.

It can be tempting to take 'professional' looking pictures, with white backgrounds. However, in my experience this puts buyers off – it can look as if the product you have for sale isn't real, as if you've used pictures direct from the manufacturer. It's far better to show it well, but show it in a normal, domestic setting.

You'll have complete control over how much you're willing to accept for your item. It can be a good idea to accept 'offers', especially if your item has been listed for a while and hasn't sold. You don't have to accept them, but it can be a good way to tempt buyers into thinking they're getting a bargain.

Remember, with online marketplaces you will have to deal with the dreaded general public. Most of the time you'll encounter no problems at all, but be prepared for some level of hassle. You may find a buyer wants to return the item for some reason, you may find the buyer argues about the condition it's in.

Generally, these sites favour the buyer, rather than the seller, so it's always a risk you will take in exchange for a higher price – but if you're prepared to accept that as a possibility, it's worth a try.

Finally, remember that online marketplaces may include fees and charges that affect the final amount you make. That can include listing fees, transaction fees, commission and postage fees. Always take that into account when you're setting your pricing.

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Using online marketplaces and resellers is a good way to free up space and make some cash with your old camera gear

Sites that buy camera gear

- MPB.com
- wexphotovideo.com
- parkcameras.com
- cameraworld.co.uk
- jessops.com
- harrisoncameras.co.uk
- cameracentreuk.com
- lcegroup.co.uk

Online sellers and traders

Selling your gear to a reseller such as MPB, Wex, London Camera Exchange and so on is a quick, simple and reassuring way to offload your gear.

With this method, you'll usually have to fill in a short form detailing exactly what you have to sell, and what condition it's in. Try to be as honest as possible about what state it's in – you may only be disappointed if a quote is adjusted otherwise.

Many sites will offer an almost instantaneous quote for you to consider. You may well find it's a bit less than you'd expect to get from the likes of eBay et al, but it could be a price worth paying for the convenience, reassurance and speed at which you're likely to receive your potential cash.

Some sites offer next day collection, at no extra cost, so you could find the cash landing in your bank account very quickly indeed. Many sites also offer you the option to use your existing gear as a trade-in to buy something new, which can also be very tempting, and a good way to bring down the cost of a new (to you) bit of kit.

You won't have to deal with the

hassle of creating an online listing, sorting out tricky postage options, or have to worry about potential returns or unjustified complaints about your items.

Although a quote like this might be lower than from an online marketplace, remember that the quote you'll be given – presuming your gear is in the condition stated – is what you will receive. There will be no commission, fees or postage to take off, so the difference may not be so great after all.

What about smartphones?

Believe it or not, old smartphones are in high demand. Many of us have a drawer hiding at least one old bit of tech, and there are lots of sites that will take them off your hands.

You could use a site like BackMarket, which scours different dealers and promises to offer you the best price. It's a very easy to use website, and you'll be walked through the process of getting a quote for your smartphone in a couple of minutes.

There are also sites such as Music Magpie, envirofone and CEX. It's worth checking all of the different sites to find the best deal possible – and you might find that some sites will take tech that others won't.

You'll need to declare the condition that your phone is in, usually taking into account any scratches or visible damage to the casing or any buttons. You may also need to declare the battery health, and whether or not it turns on.

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Got a bunch of old smartphones lying around? Get them out of your life!

Sometimes, you'll find that your offer can be reduced once the company receives your device. You don't need to accept an offer, but it pays to take plenty of pictures, or a video, of anything you're selling before you ship it off. That way, you can dispute it if the company tries to claim it's in a worse condition than you stated.

Lastly, you will generally get the most for any smartphone if it's unlocked – that is, it's not tied to a particular network. You can still usually sell it if it's locked, but you may find there's a substantial amount knocked off the value if so. Unlocked is the standard now for all new phones that are sold in the UK, but if you've had one languishing in a drawer for several years you may not be so lucky.

To get it unlocked, you can take it to a high street store offering an unlock service, or phone your network provider and ask if they'll do it – usually they will for a charge. You can then figure out if it's worth paying this compared to the reduction in the quote from a reselling site – sometimes it will be, sometimes it won't.

THIS WAY UP
THIS WAY UP
CLIENTS NAME:

Keep your old boxes if you like – but don't expect them to add too much to the value of your stuff

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Should I save the boxes?

We know that lots of people love to hold on to the boxes that their photographic gear came in, for the potential resale value.

If you've got loads of storage space and don't mind some of it being taken up by empty boxes, then yes, you may find you can add on a few pounds when reselling your gear via private auction sites and the like.

However, don't fret if you've long since chucked the cardboard in the recycling. If your gear is in good condition, it won't really affect the resale value much, if at all. Many reselling sites won't even ask you for it, and won't knock anything from the quote they give you if you don't have it.

It's worth keeping hold of the manuals, though, if you can. Although they can generally be found online, a physical copy doesn't take up too much room and may sweeten the deal just a little if you can present a bit of kit with the original documentation.

Low-budget low-fi

Exploring budget-friendly analogue photography: **Mike Crawford** looks at experimental options to save costs and inspire creativity

A year ago, I wrote about currently available films which are good quality and well-priced. Not much has changed since then. Foma and Kentmere produce the best value black & white films, with the extra money-saving option of bulk loading 35mm. This too applies to classic Ilford films such as FP4+ and HP5+. While they are still reasonably priced per roll, certainly compared to Kodak, using bulk rolls should save about £2 per film.

For colour, the choice remains far more limited. If bought in packs of three, 35mm Kodak Gold 200 works out less than £10 per roll, but from there, all other films get increasingly more expensive. Analogue photography can be a costly pastime, particularly when it comes to cameras, but there are always some other ways to save money if we are willing to take a slightly different approach in our photography.

Given that I work as a black & white printer, I tend to be quite precise in how I photograph. While much of my work is shot on high-speed 35mm, I still want the results to be technically exact. Even more so when it comes to the clarity and detail of medium format. However, sometimes it's good to step sideways, try something more unpredictable and work with the limitations of simple, inexpensive kit. It needn't cost much to experiment, and perhaps in doing so, a different sensibility will inspire our photography.

Half-frame

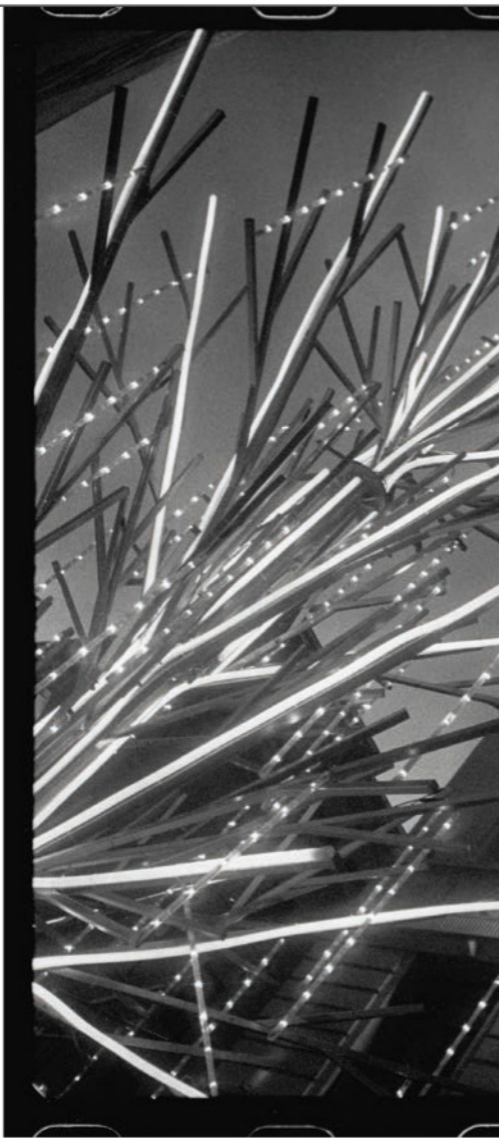
Most readers will recognise the benefits, and sometimes perils, of buying second-hand equipment online. So many film cameras command prices far higher than would have been imagined in the early post-digital days of eBay bargains and studio clearances. There are still some good deals to be found, for example, Bronica 120 cameras remain far cheaper than Hasselblads, while the classic Pentax K1000 can be bought for less than £100.

I am rather intrigued by smaller, half-frame cameras, which gained a lot of attention last year with the launch of the Pentax 17. At double the number of shots per 35mm roll, they have been promoted for their cost savings, though I am more interested in the creative potential of the format. As some of my work embraces and accentuates grain, I am not put off by the negative's small size, and I am particularly drawn to the possibilities of diptychs, produced by printing or scanning two adjoining frames together.

In 2008 I visited a retrospective exhibition of the American photographer Ray K Metzker, and left inspired by his half-frame diptychs: small, intimate prints, accentuating the graphic interplay between two photographs. I wondered if these juxtapositions were random or planned. Subsequently I bought a 1962 Olympus Pen EE online, which although fixed focus, uses a mechanical metering system linked to a selenium cell, which automatically sets the exposure.

Another, more diaristic use of half-frame is seen in the work of photographer and educator Mick Williamson. For years, he has shot with an Olympus Pen, snapping spontaneously wherever he is, documenting his life. At photographic events, I've watched his small, unobtrusive camera suddenly appear, not even raised to his eye before the shot is taken. He has accumulated a huge archive, with a selection recently published as *From the Photo-Diaries of Mick Williamson* (www.mickwilliamson.com).

While the Pentax 17 has been celebrated for the return of a major brand to film camera production, it costs close to £500, so is not particularly in the budget range.

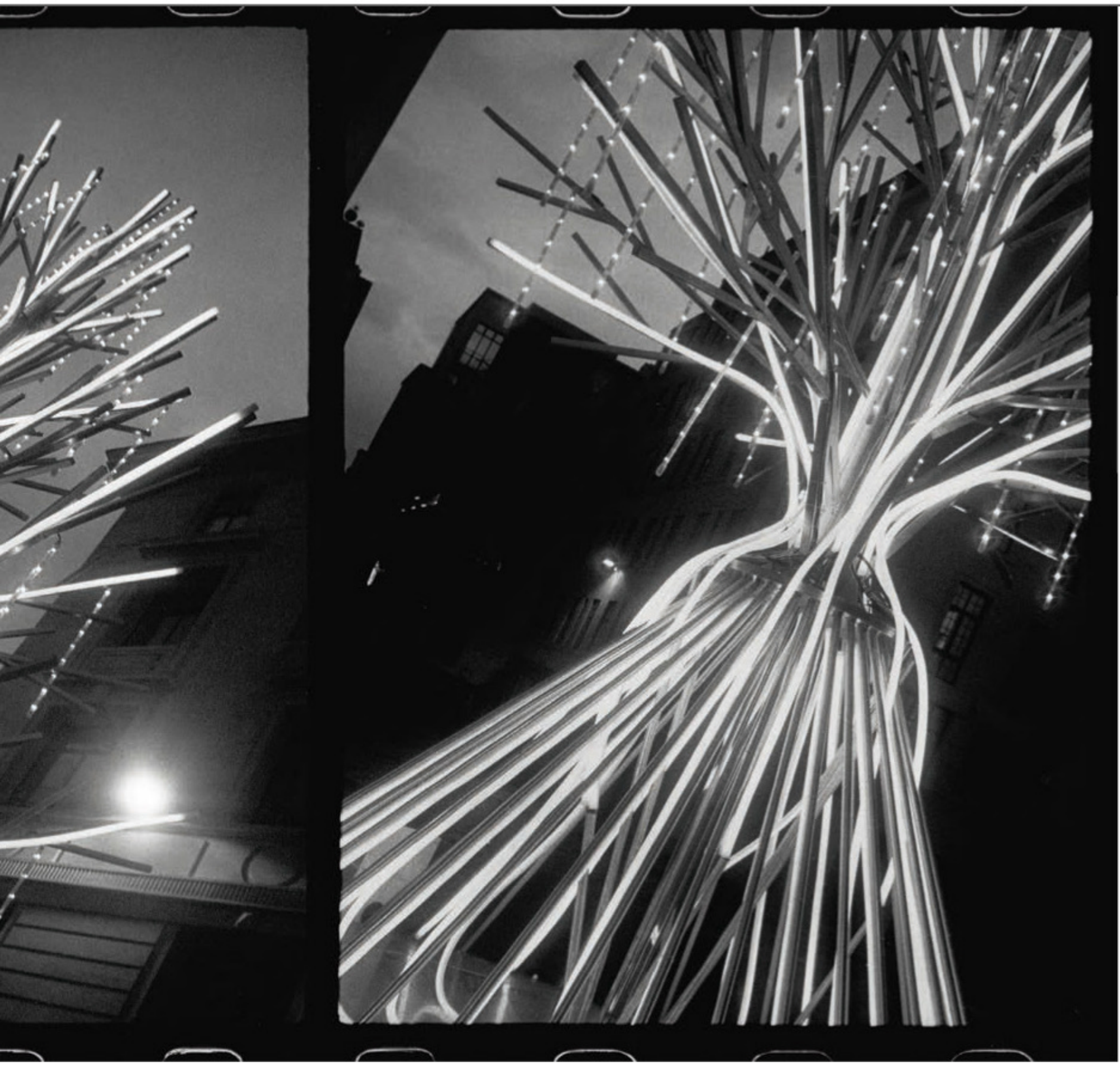


Another new half-frame, the Kodak branded Ektar H35, is more basic, with fixed lens, shutter and aperture. It has gained a following for its simplicity, particularly the ability to work in diptychs, and retails around £50, similar to the starting price of a second-hand Olympus Pen.

Plastic cameras – plastic lenses

Over the past 30 years, a lot of experimental work has been produced with inexpensive plastic cameras. Once sold as cheap novelties, Holga and Diana cameras are now appreciated for the soft, atmospheric results produced by plastic lenses, making the most of their individual, low-fi aesthetics.

The medium format Holga 120N is still reasonably priced at £35. Among its many users is landscape photographer Michael Kenna, whose 2020 book *Holga* compiled different work taken with the camera. While normally he relies on the precision of his Hasselblad, employing long



Neon Christmas Diptych While this diptych was planned in advance, often it is the randomness of adjoining frames which create unexpected and rewarding pairs. Ray K Metzker described his diptychs as Couplings. **Olympus Pen EE, Fomapan 400**

Olympus Pen EE Half-frame photography's heyday was in the 1960s and '70s, when most camera companies were producing a number of models. The range of Olympus Pens were probably the most popular, so are relatively easy to find second-hand. My 1962 Pen EE cost £20 over 15 years ago, but prices are currently from £50 upwards. EE stand for Electronic Eye and the camera does not require batteries, providing the selenium cell around the lens is functioning, which sets the automatic exposure.

© MIKE CRAWFORD

exposures, he also appreciates the unpredictability and randomness of the Holga, quite the opposite of his usual practice. Speaking to *Amateur Photographer* in 2021 he commented: 'The images may be out of focus, under or overexposed, scratched and/or vignetted. Or they could be magical in a way that could not be previsualised.'

Similar results can be produced using earlier, mass-produced cameras such as the wide range of Kodak Brownies, Agfa Clacks and other cheap popular cameras. The first Brownies, starting from 1900, revolutionised photography, making it more accessible and affordable, even if this basic box camera allowed none of the controls offered by the equipment used by more serious photographers.

The website www.brownie-camera.com lists over 100 models, produced up to 1986. The first Brownies used the long-obsolete 117 format, but from the 1930s, millions were made using 120 or the smaller 127 format. Others took 620 film, and while production of this stopped in the 1990s, it is the same size as 120, so can be re-rolled onto thinner 620 metal spools.

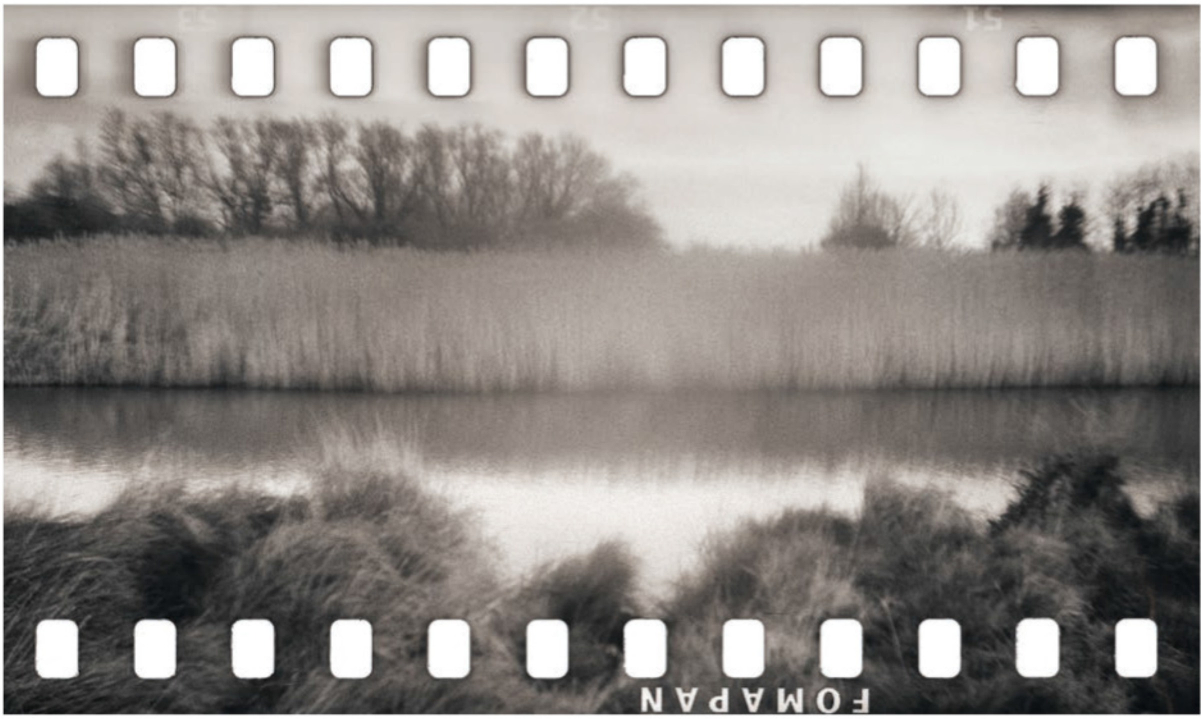
By now, 127 should be another obsolete format. The big film companies have not produced any for decades, but it is still available in five different emulsions, cut down from other existing film stock, spooled and re-branded in Japan by Rera Pan. For this article however, I took an alternative approach and loaded 35mm Fomapan 400 into a 1959 Brownie 127, bought for £1 at a camera fair. I trusted it would stay flat and undamaged once wrapped around the takeup spool and remembered to cover up the red observation window used to check the frame numbers printed on the film's backing paper.

The results are….. well, I rather like them, showing the full height of the film, including brand markings, frame numbers, and very predominantly, the sprocket holes. While not subtle, and probably not for all, they definitely make a statement, proudly showing their analogue origins.

Pinhole photography

One further option, requiring an even smaller budget, is pinhole photography. There are countless possibilities for converting different household items into a functioning but basic camera. Boxes, tins and cans are popular, though access to simple darkroom facilities for processing is beneficial. There are several high-quality, professionally made cameras, (my favourite being the Ondu), but part of the appeal of pinhole is the challenge of making it.

Pinhole photographs are not technically sharp but depending on the size and precision of the hole, can produce work with a 'relative' sharpness, giving a soft, distinctive appearance. As there is never an exact point of focus, nor any lens distortion or curvature, they will also have an unlimited depth of field.



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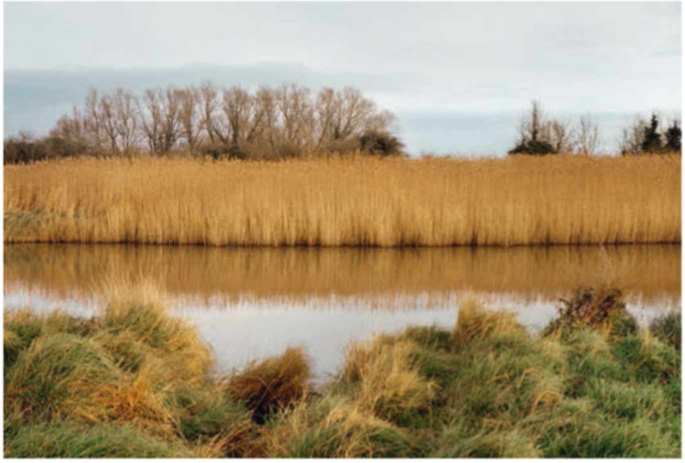
Somerset Lake
I wasn't sure whether to leave the sprockets on this one or crop them out. It's a distinctive look, but I think would work well for a small series, printed relatively small. The plastic lens is optimised for the focus to be set from five feet to infinity, though close-ups could be taken with an additional Kodisk filter.
Kodak Brownie 127, Fomapan 400

Kodak Brownie 127
This version of the Brownie was manufactured between 1956 and 1959, with several million cameras being sold worldwide in that time. The simple fixed lens is set to f/14 with a 1/50 shutter speed. For black & white films, its instruction manual recommended Verichrome Pan (125 ISO) for sunny conditions and Tri-X Pan (400 ISO) for 'dull winter days.' At 80 ISO, Kodacolor 127 film was only suggested for bright sunshine.



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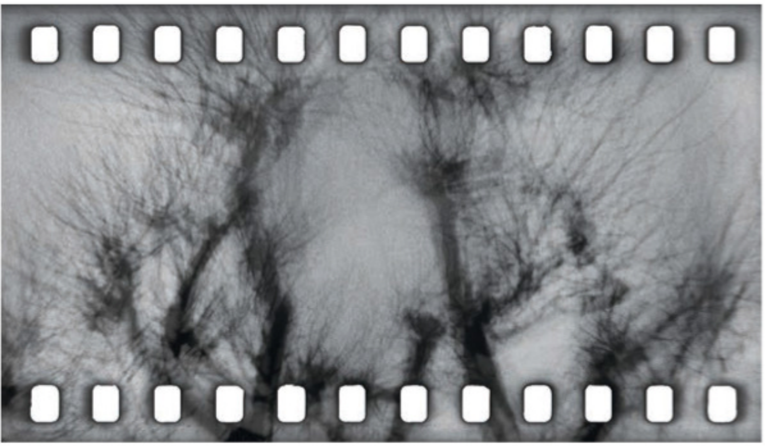
Somerset Lake in Colour As a comparison, which will clearly show the limitations of the Kodak Brownie, I also took a photo of the same scene using a somewhat higher-quality camera, with Kodak Gold 200.
Konica Hexar, Kodak Gold 200



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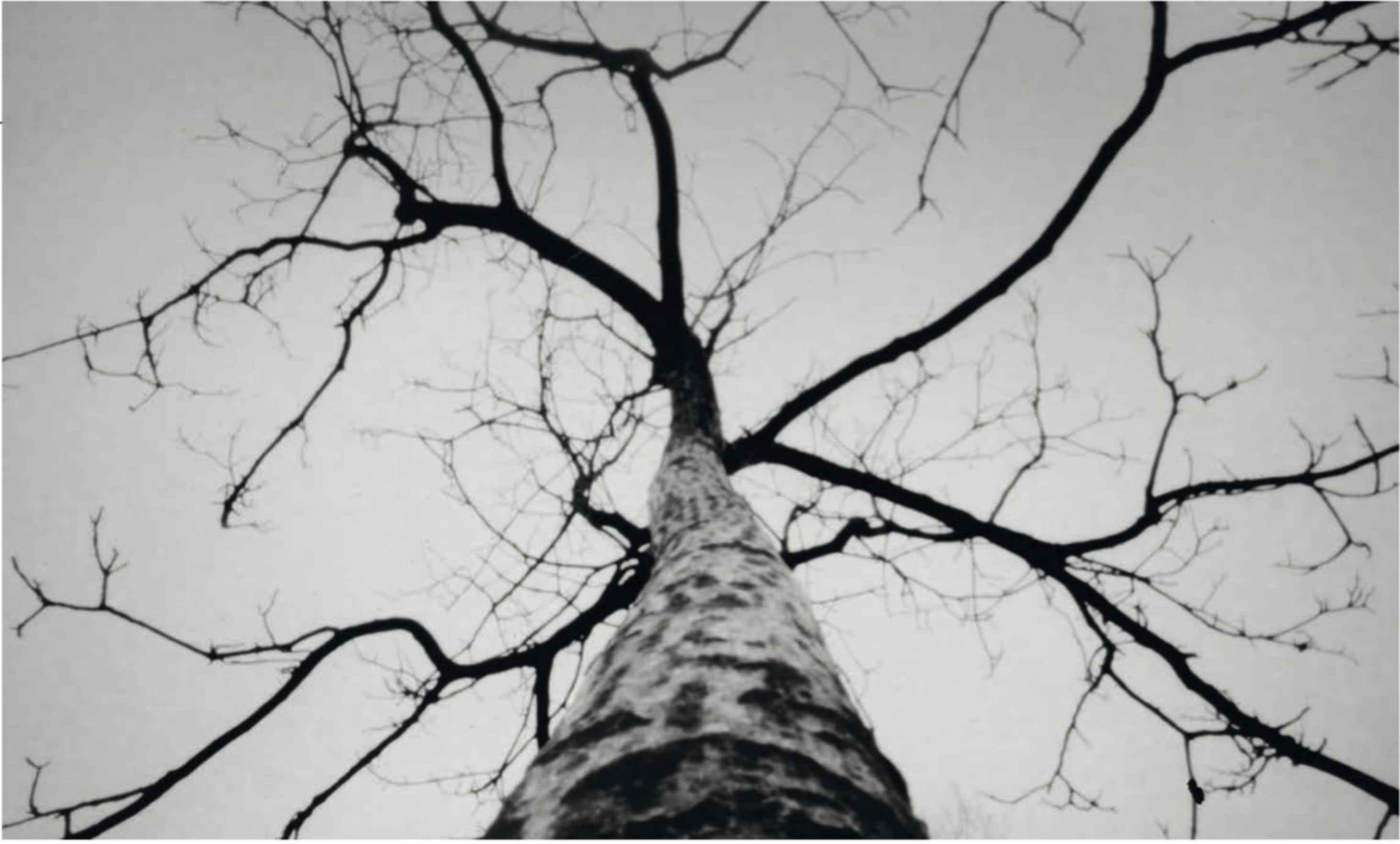
Multiple exposure
As the Brownie has a very simple shutter, multiple exposures on the same frame are possible. While this photo was taken handheld, to purposely create a sense of movement, the camera could be taped to a tripod, (having no tripod thread), and a series of exposures made of moving objects within a frame.
Kodak Brownie 127, Fomapan 400

There are some practical considerations when making a camera. What photographic material to shoot on, the camera's focal length (i.e. otherwise the distance from pinhole to film plane), and the size of pinhole. These last two are linked. Commercially produced cameras tend to use precision, laser-drilled holes, between 0.1mm and 0.6mm in width. These can also be bought individually for camera projects, which I have to admit is my preference, though making a pinhole for a camera is simple. A needle is inserted in a small piece of flat tin, such as from a drinks can, laying on a thick card. The tin is rotated back and forth to produce a tiny round hole, which should be sanded with fine emery paper to prevent ragged edges. Different-sized needles will naturally produce different-sized pinholes.

Websites, such as www.mrpinhole.com, provide information, including exposure charts, comparative needle sizes, and the formulae for working out f-stops. This is effectively the focal length divided by the size of the hole. For example, a camera with an internal depth of 50mm, which uses a 0.2mm pinhole, will have a f-stop of f/250 (50 ÷ 0.2 = 250). For exposure times, it is recommended to take a reading at f/22, then increase by the number of stops, in this instance six stops to f/256, taking into account reciprocity failure.

While film can be used, and it would be quite easy to rig up a way to utilise 4x5 sheet film holders, held on to the camera with rubber bands, it is quite common to make paper negatives. Photographic paper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Scanned Paper Negative Photographed with a 0.3mm pinhole for eight minutes on an overcast morning. As the box has an internal depth of 75mm, the f-stop works out to be f/250. **Morriscam, Ilford Mutigrade RC, PQ Developer 1+30, 2.5 minutes**

Morriscam The Victorian artist, designer and political activist William Morris famously said: 'Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful.' I can't imagine what he would have thought of a camera made from a box containing mugs decorated with his wallpaper designs! It took about an hour to build, and the only expense was buying the pinholes, though I could have made these too. I planned the camera to have three pinholes. The central one for a wide image, and to use the left and right to create an overlapping effect. On testing however, it turned out I had accidentally made a 3D pinhole camera, as the two images aligned perfectly under a stereo viewer.

is cut to size and taped or lightly stuck inside. The camera I used was made from a presentation gift box for coffee mugs, sporting a decorative William Morris wallpaper design. The only costs were for the pinholes, bought from Reality So Subtle, and matt black acrylic paint used internally to reduce reflections.

Paper negatives

Over the years, I have worked on several projects using paper negatives, and while not applicable to all work, they are a viable and very economical option for photographers to explore when using large format and pinhole cameras. As they are Orthochromatic (so can be processed under red light), their tonality does have limitations. Deep blue skies will appear dark on the negative, so will be light on a print or inverted scan. This also makes blue eyes appear distinctively bright, though in return, red hair, skin tones and lips will appear darker.

It is possible to print paper negatives conventionally in the darkroom, however the base texture will be apparent. In the 19th century, before the use of glass, the first negatives were made on paper, and it was customary to rub clear wax on the back to make them more opaque for printing and reduce their fibrous texture. It is more common now to scan the negatives, which then allows all the usual options for digital processing and printing.

PROCESSING PAPER NEGATIVES

Paper negatives can never provide the same clarity, chromatic sensitivity or high speed of black & white film, but they do have their own characteristics and can produce fascinating results at a fraction of the price. They should not however, be processed like a conventional print in full strength developer. This will invariably produce a far too contrasty image lacking any finesse or shadow detail. Unless such a look was wanted, I usually rate and meter paper negatives at 3 ISO and process in very dilute paper developer. For resin-coated materials, if a normal process time was 1 minute at 1+9 dilution, this can be increased to at least 1+30, often more, then tested between 2 to 4 minutes development. The negative will appear grey and lighter compared to a normal black & white print, but will retain far more detail, providing better scans. Alternatively, it may be worth experimenting with film developer which will also produce a softer contrast.

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

Simplify

My photographic journey has been a whirlwind of camera acquisitions since 1970, spanning Olympus, Lumix, Leica, Nikon, Canon, and culminating in a 61-megapixel Sony behemoth. Yet, after sifting through 270,000 images in Lightroom, a surprising truth emerged: my most cherished photos often originated from much humbler beginnings. Many of my favourite shots were captured on a modest 12-megapixel Olympus from over a decade ago.

The reality, I've eventually accepted, is that the best imagery lies not in the camera's specifications, but in the photographer's artistry. Furthermore, the advanced features of modern cameras can sometimes hinder rather than help, getting in the way of the photographer's artistic vision.

In light of these realisations, I've simplified my setup. I've parted ways with my high-end gear and embraced a Micro Four Thirds system from a bygone era. This shift has reignited my passion for photography, allowing me to focus on the core elements of visual storytelling. Ultimately, the best camera is the one that empowers you to express your unique vision.

Nigel Lomas

Win! **SAMSUNG** A Samsung 256GB PRO Plus MicroSDXC memory card with SD Adapter offers up to 180MB/s read and 130MB/s write speeds, ideal for high-res photos and 4K video. 6-proof protection (water, temperature, X-ray, magnet, drop, wearout) and a 10-year limited warranty. Visit **www.samsung.com/uk/memory-storage-devices/**

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LETTER OF THE WEEK WINS A SAMSUNG 256GB PRO PLUS MICRO SDXC CARD. NOTE: PRIZE APPLIES TO UK AND EU RESIDENTS ONLY

Brian: Black Country boy

Brian Griffin tribute

Thanks for the excellent and informative obituary for Brian Griffin. I spent many a happy time with Brian in our local, The Blacksmiths Arms, in Rotherhithe Street, London. From time to time we amused/dismayed the locals by communicating in Black Country dialect, which they found incomprehensible.

However the final paragraph would have sent Brian into a state of serious disagreement. One of the greatest insults to a Black Country person is to call them a Brummie, let alone 'a true Brummie at heart'. What Black Country people think of Brummies is summed up by the fact that Black Country people refer to a lump hammer as a 'Brummie screwdriver'. The Black Country is and was proud of its manufacturing skills in many fields – Birmingham could never make that boast.

Everything else that you say about Brian is true – and, for the record, he was 'a true Black Country boy at heart'.

Gerry Griffin (no relation!)

Amy Davies, Features Editor replies: As the person who commissioned this I'm ashamed to say I missed that in the final proof…. I'm a Black Country woman myself and can't believe that crept through. I no longer live in the area but I am always offended if anybody refers to me as a Brummie!

Chris Porsz

Thank heavens I've subscribed to AP for over 20 years, otherwise I'd have missed all those wonderful books you have reviewed, especially Chris Porsz's street books. His latest, *Streets of America*, excellently reviewed by Amy Davies (14 January), now joins my library collection of all ten of Chris's incredible books.

In *Streets of America* Chris shares his kindly take on The American Dream through his instantaneous ability to recognise, compose and shoot in the blink of an eye, as well as win the approval of complete strangers.

Any professional documentary photographer would be proud of having just a few of these books. Yet Chris is a self-taught amateur who shares his unique eye whilst holding down a demanding full-time job.

Not only are his books wonderfully entertaining but also they are a masterclass on street photography, and his work should be duly recognised as equal to that of other masters of documentary street photographers. I wonder if Chris could be considered as Britain's Vivian Maier?

John Heywood

Streets of America
Chris Porsz

Chris Porsz has a wonderful, unique eye, writes John Heywood

THIS WEEK WE ASKED...

What are your best money-saving tips for photography?

You said...

Shaun Bradbury
Do your research properly, get the best you can afford for your chosen genre and avoid upgrades later.

Chris Andrews
If you aren't happy with the results you're getting, invest in training rather than assuming you need 'better' gear. How many posts do you see saying 'what camera/lens did you use?'" when really it's the photographer's skills rather than the gear that predominantly got the result.

Simon Kimpton @SimonKimpton
If you're doing this as a hobby, don't be lured into the temptations of owning the latest gear.

Paul Russell
Don't buy everything in one go. Start small. Find out what interests you. No point buying all the toys, for them to gather dust. You can focus your spend on what will help you grow. Cameras have been great for 15 years, lenses even longer. The improvements since are often incremental, so buy gear that does the job and you are happy using. Join a club or take a night class, or both, to accelerate your learning.

Steve Denny
Don't go buying expensive cameras. End of the day, no one really cares which camera you used to get a great image.

João Abm Yordanov Serralheiro
Fuel/expenses to go out and actually *use* the gear you have > New gear! and something nowadays everyone seems to have forgotten... *read*! like from paper magazines and books! YT is nice but...

meshal @Q8linux
Don't spend thousands on a tripod, any cheap carbon fiber tripod will do it.

Matt Jerrams
Photo books over gear every time. No bad cameras have been made since 2012...so get something cheap and learn.

Eric Hands
Use an ad blocker.

Steve Walker
If you're contemplating buying a new lens, rent it first, to see whether it fits what you need. (Then buy it used if possible.)

Saturday 14 Photography @SPhotograp9675
Stop looking and start capturing!

Kirk Mason
Learn to love what you have, and maximise its potential. I was taken aback when I finally upgraded my gear in quite a big way to see how I had to relearn a lot which was already second nature with my first setup.

Share your photos and comments with us on social!
See page 3 for how to contact us

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Best cameras under £300

Get a camera on the cheap, with the AP team's recommendations for the best sub-£300 cameras you can buy

It's no secret that people are put off digital photography due to perceptions surrounding the cost. More and more expensive cameras and lenses seem to arrive every year, even while many people are struggling to afford the basics of living, never mind hobbies and luxuries. And what's more, the unstoppable rise of the smartphone photographer has caused many manufacturers to all but give up on producing affordable entry-level cameras, instead focusing solely on the expensive stuff.

But all hope need not be lost! It's still perfectly possible to find a great camera for less than £300 – and we do mean a great camera, not a cheap plastic compact with a tiny sensor. You just have to look on the second-hand market. We've provided plenty of bargains for you in this issue, with Jon Stapley's guide to the best bargains on full-frame DSLRs also featured on pages 55 to 59. There, Jon has also gone through the best reputable retailers to buy from, as well as how to navigate the condition ratings that they use for grading gear, so head there first if you need a primer.

This guide is pulling together recommendations from the whole AP team, based on our testing and reviewing experience. We've checked prices up to the last minute to try to keep our listings as accurate as possible, though naturally things do move quickly on the second-hand market, and prices do fluctuate. A deal that's there today may not be there tomorrow – so if you see a bargain you like, don't delay!

Camera types

We've separated this guide into three distinct camera types, to make it easier for you to find the camera that's right for you.

Mirrorless cameras: While modern mirrorless cameras have a reputation for being expensive, there are plenty of options on the second-hand market that can be picked up cheaply, particularly from systems that have been going longer. Mirrorless cameras are generally the best option if you want something small and portable but still with plenty of picture-taking potential. However, remember that a used mirrorless camera almost certainly won't be packaged with a lens, so you'll need to factor that into your budget.

DSLRs: The good old stalwart of the digital photography world, the humble DSLR is definitely in its twilight years – but that just makes the deals all the more tempting. DSLRs that once cost thousands can be found at a fraction of the price, and many photographers still prefer them for the immediacy of the optical viewfinder (mirrorless cameras use electronic viewfinders). Once again, you'll need to factor in the cost of the lens, though a cheap option will not be hard to find in any of the major DSLR mounts we've covered.

Compact cameras: Compact cameras have fixed lenses – so the listed price encompasses everything you need to get out and start shooting. Cheap compacts used to be a mainstay of the camera market, however they were all but destroyed by the ubiquity of the smartphone. The compacts we've included in this guide tend more towards the superzoom end of the market – offering big, powerful optical zoom lenses and a tangible advantage over a phone.

Top second-hand buying tips

The world of second-hand cameras is a big, complex place – so keep your head! Here are a few tips to help guide you through your bargain-hunting.

1 Check the condition. This doesn't mean just reading the condition rating listed on the site, but checking the photos of the camera for visible signs of wear and tear. A few scuffs and marks are completely normal, but it's a good idea to sense-check that the camera doesn't look more beaten up than it's listed as being. Checking the shutter count can also be a good idea here – see our used DSLR feature on page 55 for more on this.

2 Compare prices. You might think you've found a great deal – but have you actually? Prices vary pretty dramatically between different sellers, and you can't always guarantee consistency – in researching prices for our second-hand guides, we often see a camera listed for one price in 'Good' condition at one retailer, but listed for less as 'Excellent' at another. It doesn't always make sense – so check, check, check.

3 Ask questions. Retailers staff those contact centres for a reason – use them! All the major UK retailers will have a contact team on hand that will be able to advise you on what the right camera is for you, and potentially steer you in a better direction if it turns out you're looking at something too advanced for your level (or indeed, not advanced enough).

4 Once you get the camera, test it! While all reputable retailers will test used equipment before selling it, no process is perfect, and sometimes faults slip through the cracks. Give your camera a thorough going-over as soon as you get it, checking that all its functions perform as they should. Taking a photo of a blank white wall or piece of paper is a good way to check for sensor spots and should be an immediate priority.

Mirrorless

Sony A5100

Key specs:

- 24.3MP APS-C sensor
- Sony E lens mount
- 6fps burst shooting
- Full HD 50p video

Sony's APS-C cameras have always been speedy, and back in 2014, the Sony A5100 was impressing us with its 6fps burst speeds and 0.06sec AF acquisition times. It's a capable, unfussy little camera that essentially provides a stripped-back version of the popular A6000. So, while you don't get a viewfinder or much in the way of external control dials, the core imaging experience still shines, and for a good deal less than the A6000 model.

This is still one of the smallest APS-C cameras you can buy, and is a great choice if you want to have a pocketable camera that doesn't compromise too much on image quality. Sony's E-mount lens range gives you plenty of choice when it comes to optics, and the easy-to-use flip-around touchscreen makes the A5100 a pleasure to operate.

How much will it cost?

The second-hand price band for the A5100 is pretty narrow, with samples in decent condition tending to go for between £280 and £299. You will have to spend a bit more to kit yourself out with an E-mount lens, but happily there are a fair few cheap options in the system.

Olympus OM-D E-M10 Mark III

Key specs:

- 16MP Four Thirds sensor
- Micro Four Thirds lens mount
- 8.6fps burst shooting
- 4K 25p video

The Olympus OM-D E-M10 Mark III is a mirrorless camera with an interchangeable-lens mount, based on the Micro Four Thirds design. When we reviewed it a few years ago, we stated that it was made for budding photographers who want to take a step up from their smartphone camera. This is still true today – it's beginner-friendly, highly portable and easy to use, but also offers a real step up in terms of image quality and versatility.

The OM-D E-M10 Mark III is, as you might expect, the upgrade from the Mark II, and when it launched in 2017, it gained an updated 121-point autofocus system and 4K video recording thanks to Olympus's TruePic VIII processor. Apart from those changes, the Mark III and II are pretty much identical, but the significantly superior autofocus system makes the Mark III the best to go for in our view, if you can afford it.

How much will it cost?

At the top end, this one can nudge over our budget, but at time of writing there are plenty of E-M10 Mark III cameras in 'Excellent' condition for between £280 and £299. Micro Four Thirds is a venerable lens mount and you won't have any trouble finding a cheap lens to go with the camera.

Panasonic Lumix GH4

Key specs:

- 16MP Four Thirds sensor
- Micro Four Thirds lens mount
- 12fps burst shooting
- 4K 30p video

The Lumix GH4 was a milestone of a mirrorless camera. Not only was it the first mirrorless camera (or 'compact system camera', as it was known back then) to offer 4K video, but also was the first camera of its type that marked out Panasonic as a serious player in the video space. Nowadays, it's commonplace for videographers, vloggers and filmmakers to use modern Panasonic cameras such as the Lumix GH7 or the full-frame Lumix S5 II – but the Lumix GH4 got there first.

It's still a great camera today – and not just for video. Like many of the Lumix GH models that have come since, the GH4 is an eminently capable hybrid camera for photographers too, with a silent electronic shutter, impressive burst shooting and excellent image quality from its 16MP sensor. Though we shouldn't get carried away – if you've no interest in video, this probably isn't the one for you.

How much will it cost?

This is another camera that can nudge over budget, but you can get it across the major retailers including Park Cameras, Wex and MPB for somewhere between £250 and £299, in 'Good' condition or better. Once again, it's the Micro Four Thirds lens mount, so you won't have to spend too much more for a decent-quality lens.

Olympus Pen E-PL7

Key specs:

- 16.1MP Four Thirds sensor
- Micro Four Thirds lens mount
- 8fps burst shooting
- Full HD 30p video

Olympus's Pen cameras (and, latterly, OM System Pen cameras) have always had something of a cool factor. Slender, stylish and easy to use, they're the kind of cameras you can carry everywhere with you, especially if you pair them with the kinds of slim pancake lenses with which the Micro Four Thirds system is particularly well-endowed. The E-PL7 camera, like others in the Pen series, has something of a rangefinder style to it, without being an actual rangefinder – in fact, there's no viewfinder at all. No built-in flash, either.

Still, with a 16MP Four Thirds sensor, the Pen E-PL7 can most certainly deliver the goods when it comes to image quality. You may or may not find the flip-down screen to be useful – at the time this camera came out in 2014, it was considered terribly important for real cameras to be able to capture selfies. Front-facing screens are of course more useful for video.

How much will it cost?

This one comes in comfortably under our budget, with options in 'Good' and 'Excellent' condition ranging from £230 to £260 at Wex, MPB and other retailers. It's also possible to find the Olympus 9mm f/8 Fisheye Body Cap lens for between £50 and £70, meaning you can completely kit yourself out and stay within our £300 budget.

Canon EOS 2000D

Key specs:

- 24.1MP APS-C sensor
- Canon EF-S lens mount
- 3fps burst shooting
- Full HD 30p video

Canon has released quite a few entry-level DSLRs, and the EOS 2000D offers a good balance of features, performance and price, especially if you don't mind picking one up second-hand. With an APS-C sensor, it'll produce images of markedly superior quality to a smartphone, and having the EF-S lens mount at your disposal means access to loads of lenses, Canon-made and otherwise.

It's a pretty basic camera, as we said in our review at the time, but our main sticking point with the EOS 2000D originally was its price, and on the second-hand market that becomes a good deal more reasonable. You don't get 4K video, so those interested in video would probably be better off with a sub-£300 camera from Olympus or Panasonic. However, for beginners, the EOS 2000D is very user-friendly.

How much will it cost?

The EOS 2000D is widely available – likely because a lot of people bought it as their first camera and then traded up. This has kept second-hand prices on the camera pretty friendly, and decent-condition models can be found between £200 and £280. Get one on the low end, and you'll have no trouble at all finding a Canon EF or EF-S lens and staying within £300.

Pentax K-5 II

Key specs:

- 16.3MP APS-C sensor
- Pentax K lens mount
- 7fps burst shooting
- Full HD 30p video

A delightful APS-C DSLR from 2013, the Pentax K-5 II is a very cheap prospect indeed on the used market these days. It's a good option for those who want to dip their toe into landscape photography, as the body has that rugged weatherproofing that Pentax has long been famous for, as do plenty of the K-mount lenses that'll go with it.

The Pentax K-5 II is also a pretty good performer in low light, especially for a camera at its price. Sure, it's not going to rival the Sony A7S III any time soon, but it has a generous native ISO range of 100-12,800, which can be expanded to 80-51,200, and performance at all but the highest of these sensitivities is generally very good, with noise well controlled. You can also tweak the noise reduction settings to your taste, which is a nice touch.

The autofocus system is pretty basic – another reason why this camera is a good option for landscapes.

How much will it cost?

The Pentax K-5 II goes for about £250 when it's in tip-top shape, but we've seen it listed at MPB for as little as £160 in 'Good' condition, and that is an outright bargain. At that price you'll definitely be able to get a good K-mount lens and still stay under £300.

Nikon D5500

Key specs:

- 24.2MP APS-C sensor
- Nikon F (DX) lens mount
- 8fps burst shooting
- Full HD 60p video

This DSLR was part of the upper end of Nikon's entry-level offering. It offers pretty much the exact decent-if-unexceptional feature-set you'd expect from such a camera, like 24MP resolution and 8fps burst rate, but at the same time it adds a few interesting extras that help it stand out.

One is its vari-angle screen, which extends out to the side and is also touch-sensitive. It's great not only for composition, but also has a fairly slick navigational UI that makes it easy to scroll through the camera's menus and settings. It's handy for video monitoring too, and the D5500 puts in a surprisingly good showing in this department. Not only does it offer Full HD video at the higher maximum frame rate of 60p, but also incorporates the 'flat' picture style from the Nikon D810, which allows the user to capture a low-contrast image with maximised dynamic range designed to provide lots of flexibility for colour grading. It's not quite a proper Log profile, but it's still pretty handy.

How much will it cost?

While the Nikon D5500 can cost around £300, it is available cheaper in 'Good' condition, with options between £230 and £240 currently available at Wex and Park Cameras. That will leave you a little wiggle-room to put towards an F-mount lens.

Canon EOS 70D

Key specs:

- 20.2MP APS-C sensor
- Canon EF-S lens mount
- 7fps burst shooting
- Full HD 30p video

An enduringly popular enthusiast's DSLR, the Canon EOS 70D is a likeable camera that used to command a four-figure price-tag – so at the kinds of prices we're seeing nowadays, it's frankly a steal. It benefits from Canon's Dual Pixel CMOS autofocus system when focusing in live view on the LCD screen. And indeed, thanks to the fact that the LCD screen fully articulates, the EOS 70D is quite easy and pleasant to use in this fashion. For this reason and others, the EOS 70D was actually quite popular among YouTubers for a time, and its Full HD 30p video still looks pretty good today.

Photography-wise, the EOS 70D has a fairly standard enthusiast's feature-set. The burst rate is snappy, noise is well-handled up to around ISO 6400, and colours in the images are pleasingly punchy and vivid. Its body is a plasticky polycarbonate rather than the more robust magnesium alloy of Canon's more expensive APS-C offerings.

How much will it cost?

The Canon EOS 70D is all over the second-hand market, which has helped its price to come down. For top-notch condition you'll have to pay about £309, but if not then you can easily cruise in under budget. We've seen it as low as £199 at Park Cameras and still listed in 'Good' condition.

Compacts

Panasonic Lumix DC-FZ82

Key specs:

- 18.1MP 1/2.3in sensor
- 60x optical zoom lens
- 10fps burst shooting
- 4K 30p video

This camera recently got a very, very (very) minor refresh as the Lumix FZ82D, and that means that the original FZ82 is now cheaper than ever on the second-hand market! The Lumix FZ82 can go ultra-wide to ultra-zoom, covering a very broad equivalent range of 20mm to 1200mm and is a great point-and-shoot for those that are looking for an easy-to-operate system.

The mode dial on top of the camera allows you to take full creative control by shooting in Program, Aperture priority, Shutter priority or Manual if you wish. Though if you're craving guidance, there are also lots of scene modes to choose from. The Lumix FZ82D could be a great starting point for a beginner who is unsure how far they want to take their hobby – or perhaps someone who wants a fairly simple holiday camera that will cover them in a host of different shooting situations.

How much will it cost?

Used prices for decent condition on the Lumix FZ82 start at around £249. If you want one that's 'Like New' then you can still get it within budget at £289, and the most expensive Lumix FZ82 we've seen cost only £303. And remember, this is a compact camera, so there's no need to factor in the extra cost of a lens – you've already got one!

Canon PowerShot SX430 IS

Key specs:

- 20MP 1/2.3in CCD sensor
- 45x optical zoom lens
- 0.5fps burst shooting
- HD video at 25p

The Canon PowerShot SX430 IS is another bridge camera that makes it onto our list. Interestingly, you actually could have bought this camera brand new and still stayed within our budget, as it retailed originally with an RRP of £299.99. These days though, you're more likely to find it second-hand.

As with the Panasonic Lumix DC-FZ82 listed on the left, this camera has been designed with the amateur in mind. However, it doesn't include a mode dial on top, making it very much a point and shoot aimed at beginners. Despite this, it does sport some nice features that set it apart, such as the 45x optical zoom that goes from a 24mm view to 1080mm, plus intelligent image stabilisation (IS), meaning you can shoot steady shots even in lower light or when you're zoomed right in to your subject.

How much will it cost?

We've tried to avoid saying this name as much as possible, but a good bet for this one might be the omnivorous Amazon, where a refurbished Canon PowerShot SX430 IS can be picked up through the Amazon Renewed Store for £209. At time of writing, CeX also has the camera available online for £155 in 'B' condition – and there's an impressive five-year warranty.

Nikon Coolpix P610

Key specs:

- 16MP 1/2.3in sensor
- 60x zoom lens
- 7fps burst shooting
- Full HD 60p video

Nikon doesn't produce new Coolpix compacts any more, which is a shame, because the line was nothing if not entertaining. These cameras sometimes seemed like a bet between Nikon scientists as to how much zoom they could pack into a bridge camera body – and while the Nikon Coolpix P610 isn't the most ridiculous example, its 60x optical zoom with an equivalent range of 24-1440mm is certainly nothing to sniff at.

The lens has optical stabilisation in order to make those extra-long telephoto focal lengths actually usable without a tripod. Image quality is decent without being exceptional – there are limits to what a 1/2.3in sensor can do, and the long end of the lens does get a little fuzzy. Still, this is a well-featured camera, particularly for travel photography. It even has built-in GPS for geotagging images.

How much will it cost?

At the top end of condition ratings, the Nikon Coolpix P610 does bust our budget – however, it's an easy camera to buy second-hand, and you won't have any issues getting one for £279 or less. The lowest price we've seen for 'Good' condition is £219!

Panasonic Lumix FZ330

Key specs:

- 12.1MP 1/2.3in sensor
- 24x optical zoom lens
- 12fps burst mode
- 4K 25p video

The Lumix FZ330 is one of Panasonic's earlier premium compacts. So while the resolution is definitely on the low side, it offers a number of sophisticated features that make it worthy of consideration. It not only shoots 4K video, but also benefits from Panasonic's 4K Photo modes, which allows for the extraction of high-resolution stills from 4K footage. Clever modes like 4K pre-burst mode use the camera's internal memory buffer to capture 30 frames from before the shutter button is pressed and a further 30 frames afterwards.

The lens on the front isn't as extravagant a zoom as the others on this list, but it's a Leica DC Vario-Elmarit lens that delivers optical quality a cut above the rest – and having an f/2.8 constant aperture is hugely useful across a 24x zoom range. The dustproof and splashproof body feels solid, and speeding through the zoom range feels easy. Images look great at low ISO settings, but thanks to that small sensor, will deteriorate quickly as you push it up beyond ISO 1600.

How much will it cost?

This camera is often available for prices that exceed our budget. However, at time of writing, MPB and Park Cameras have options between £280 and £299 for 'Good' and 'Very Good' conditions.

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XPAN + 45MM F4	EXC	£3,199
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F4S BODY ONLY	E+	£249
F5 BODY ONLY	E+	£299
F50 BLACK + 35-80MM AFD	E+	£49
F50 BODY ONLY - BLACK	E+	£39
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FA BLACK BODY ONLY	EXC	£179
FM BLACK BODY ONLY	E+	£149
FM2 BLACK BODY ONLY	EXC	£219
FM2N CHROME BODY ONLY	E+	£239
FM2N CHROME BODY ONLY	E++	£249
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OM10 CHROME BODY + T20 FLASH	E+	£79
OM10 CHROME BODY ONLY	E+	£69
OM101 + 50MM F2 PF	150	£39
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OM1N CHROME BODY ONLY	EXC	£99
OM2 CHROME BODY + WINDER 2	150	£79
OM2N CHROME BODY + WINDER 2	E+	£139
OM2SP BLACK BODY + WINDER 2 + T20	E+	£149
OM2SP BLACK BODY ONLY	E+	£149
OM4 BLACK BODY ONLY	E+	£129
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SPOTMATIC SP500 + 55MM F2	E+	£79
SPOTMATIC SP500 BODY ONLY	150	£59
MG CHROME BODY ONLY	E+	£79
P30 + 28-80MM	E+	£159
P30 BODY ONLY	E++	£99
P30 BODY ONLY	E+	£89
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Readers' favourite used kit

We asked you to share your favourite second-hand purchases and why. Here's a selection of what you have bought

Paul Clark, Reading, Berkshire

PURCHASE: 2x Canon EOS 5D Mark IV from MPB

For many years my camera body of choice had been a Canon EOS 7D. I decided to upgrade to a pair of used 5D Mark IV's late in 2023. With the advent of mirrorless bodies, the cost of mirrored bodies had dropped to make them affordable for me. My main subject of photography is sports based, specifically rugby. I've found the H2 ISO setting to be brilliant for matches under the lights, albeit with a fair amount of post editing. The bodies are great for other subjects such as food and wildlife.
Facebook: @PaulClarkPhotography10

Paul upgraded his EOS 7D to an EOS 5D Mark IV, which has been great for shooting sports photography in varying light conditions

The Sigma 120-400mm is ideal for Rob's wildlife photography

Rob Lay, Thurrock, Essex

PURCHASE: Canon EOS 80D with a Sigma 120-400mm f/4.5-5.6 DG OS HSM from MPB

The reason I buy second-hand is mainly down to cost. I don't have a lot of funds due to having epilepsy and employment is not always easy. My wife and I are also carers to daughters with epilepsy, one who has it more severely and needs more care. Photography is my little break for a while where I can clear my head, and it helps with my own mental health and epilepsy. Wildlife photography is my main passion, as being out in the fresh air with nature does me the world of good.

I really like MPB because you can also trade in equipment. I have an additional 80D body as a back-up and second camera, so I don't have to change lenses while out, reducing the dust intake on the sensor.
X: @Thurrock0rob

Rob has two 80D bodies so that he doesn't need to switch lenses while out and about

Daniel Newman, Harold Hill, London

PURCHASE: Canon EOS 5D Mark III and EF 24-105mm f/4L IS USM from MPB

I purchase my photography kit second-hand, taking advantage of the incredible bargains available without overspending. The second-hand market offers high-quality gear at a fraction of the cost, perfect for photographers on a budget.

I primarily focus on portraits, landscapes and urban scenes, so I chose equipment that suits these genres. The savings allowed me to invest in lenses and accessories that enhance my creative vision. Buying second-hand stretches your budget and supports sustainability by giving gear a second life. It's a practical and rewarding choice for anyone passionate about capturing the world through a lens without breaking the bank.

Instagram: @newmansviewphotography

By purchasing used kit, Daniel has been able to stretch his budget and buy high-quality lenses and accessories

Gill Prince, Milton Keynes

PURCHASE: 2x Panasonic LUMIX S5 bodies and various lenses from Wex Photo Video and a private seller

My favourite second-hand purchase is my two Panasonic LUMIX S5 bodies and various lenses. One was from Wex and the other was from a private seller on a Facebook group, who lives locally to me. I have always purchased used equipment where possible, and I recommend the same to my tuition clients. Buying second-hand has become even easier now that mainstream retailers are offering a great range of used kit with good warranties. I do still buy privately sometimes though, when I can view it myself before making a decision. It all helps to make equipment budgets go further (more money for lenses!) so I've never seen the point of buying new, unless it's a recently launched lens or body that I can't wait to own. I got the Lumix S5 for work originally – I shoot commercial property and landscapes – but I've started to take it with me when travelling now as well, most recently to Slovenia, Singapore and Thailand!

www.gillprince.com

Above: Clarke Quay, Singapore

Right: Lake Bled, Slovenia

Left: Avro Lancaster NX611 'Just Jane'

Alan Arnold, West Midlands

PURCHASE: Canon RF 100-400mm F5.6-8 IS USM lens from MPB

My decision to buy second-hand was mainly financial, plus MPB also does part exchange so I was able to reduce the cost even more by selling a couple of lenses I no longer used after updating to the Canon R10. I had no concerns using MPB after using them previously and their descriptions of condition are accurate.

I bought the Canon 100-400mm lens for birds and insects as well as flower photography. I am really pleased with this lens with its very close focusing for its focal length and relative weight compared to my old EF 400mm, making photographing bees and insects a lot easier.

Instagram @acarnold1

Alan decided to part exchange kit he no longer used to purchase the Canon RF 100-400mm lens for his bird photography

The Sigma 17-50mm is an affordable option for those who want to upgrade their kit lens

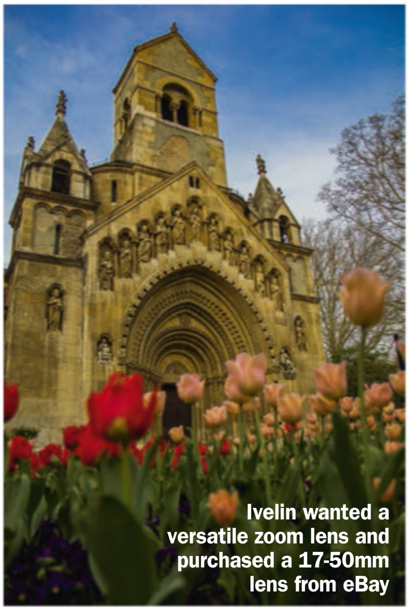
Ivelin Marev, Leeds

PURCHASE: Sigma 17-50mm f/2.8 EX DC OS HSM from eBay

My favourite second-hand purchase is a Sigma 17-50mm f/2.8 EX DC OS HSM lens. I was looking for a fast and versatile zoom lens at an affordable price and my choices came down to Tamron and Sigma. The main difference between the two is optical stabilisation: Tamron lacks it, this weighed on the choice. The Sigma is a relatively small and light lens that covers the most used focal lengths for crop bodies (in my case the Canon EOS 60D). The max aperture of f/2.8 gives freedom to work in darker conditions, while also providing decent bokeh for portrait shots.

For the price of £150 second-hand, I don't think you can find a better option. The lens is a wonderful choice for people on a budget or new to photography who want a better than standard kit lens but don't want to pay a fortune to get it.

Instagram @ivelinmarev



Ivelin wanted a versatile zoom lens and purchased a 17-50mm lens from eBay

Mhairi enjoys shooting street photography and the Olympus PEN-F is a great back-up camera

Mhairi Chambers, Edinburgh

PURCHASE: Olympus PEN-F from Cameratiks

Being a fan of Olympus cameras, and on learning that the Olympus name was going to disappear, I decided to start a collection of second-hand and vintage Olympus film and digital cameras. The Olympus PEN-F digital suited my requirements, and I spotted one in my local camera shop. A second-hand one, in excellent condition, still in the original box! Looking for a second digital body as back-up, I decided it would be a great addition for shooting street photography. This is what I mainly shoot, both colour and mono.

Instagram @chambersmhairi

Mhairi shoots street photography in colour and mono

Ben Burchell, Horsham, West Sussex

PURCHASE: Sony A6400 from Wex Photo Video

For me, my favourite second-hand purchase over the years has to be my Sony A6400. I bought this in November 2023 from Wex Photo Video. I managed to pick it up for £471.75 at the time, which for this camera on the used market, was a pretty good deal. The reason why I rate this as one of my favourite second-hand purchases is because it's such a great all-round camera for the photography I do. I dabble in landscape, event and wildlife photography; and this little camera has more than enough resolution for me and its autofocus capabilities are fantastic. And it's all been packed into such a small body!

www.bburchellphotography.co.uk

The Sony A6400 has proved to be a great all-rounder as Ben shoots landscapes, wildlife and event photography

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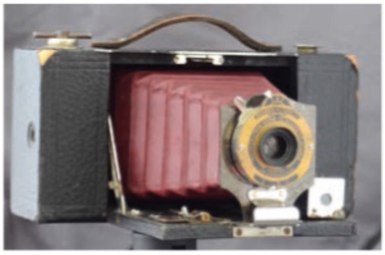
Adrian likes to shoot subjects that relate to the age of the camera he's using

Capturing the Shuttleworth collection



This Kodak No2 Folding Pocket Brownie was bought for £20

Adrian Gray, Kidlington, Oxfordshire

PURCHASE: Kodak No2 Folding Pocket Brownie

My favourite second-hand purchase is a Kodak No2 Folding Pocket Brownie dating to 1911 that I paid £20 for. I spotted this on a market stall in Oxford and was intrigued by the little wooden box badged 'Brownie' – I collect and use old cameras, and once I had opened it and realised it worked, I just had to buy it and shoot with it! I like to find subjects that fit with the age of the camera – therefore, to visit the Shuttleworth Collection and photograph aeroplanes that it might have taken photos of in daily use was a no-brainer. Dating to sometime in 1911, it's the oldest camera I own that takes 120 film, making it still easily usable.

Flickr: gray1720

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A round-up of the AP testing team's favourite and most highly rated kit, including both cameras and all kinds of accessories, across a wide range of price points

OM System Tough TG-7

● £499 ● explore.omsystem.com

This latest model in a long line of class-leading rugged cameras is waterproof to 15m, shockproof against a 2.1m drop, crushproof and freezeproof. The 25-100mm equivalent lens is paired with a 12MP sensor, with in-body stabilisation to combat shake. Viewing is via a 3in LCD. The TG-7 is also one of the few cameras of its type that can record raw files.

★★★★☆ **Reviewed 2 Apr 2024**

Canon PowerShot G7 X Mark III

● £699 ● www.canon.co.uk

This lovely little pocket camera provides a good range of features for both photography and video. You get a 20MP 1in sensor, 24-100mm equivalent f/1.8-2.8 zoom lens, 4K 30p video recording, and a tilting rear screen. It's ideal for those who'd like more advanced controls than on a smartphone.

★★★★☆ **Reviewed 28 Sep 2019**

Fujifilm X100VI

● £1,599 ● www.fujifilm.eu/uk

The sixth version of Fujifilm's charismatic rangefinder-styled compact boasts a 40MP APS-C sensor in front of its fixed 23mm f/2 lens. It also gains in-body stabilisation while barely increasing in size. Traditional analogue control dials are joined by a unique hybrid optical / electronic viewfinder and a tilting touchscreen on the back. It's a truly fabulous camera.

★★★★★ **Review 9 Apr 2024**

Ricoh GR III

● £949 ● ricohgr.eu/en-gb

A favourite of street photographers, the GR III combines a 24MP APS-C sensor and a sharp 28mm equivalent f/2.8 lens in a slim, pocketable body. It offers sensitivities up to ISO 102,400 and 4fps shooting, while in-body image stabilisation helps keeps image sharp. Viewing is via a fixed 3in rear LCD or an optional optical viewfinder that slots onto the hot shoe.

★★★★☆ **Reviewed 3 Aug 2019**

Sony RX100 VII

● £1,049 ● www.sony.co.uk

Sony has somehow crammed a 24-200mm equivalent zoom, pop-up electronic viewfinder, tilting screen, 20fps shooting and 4K video recording into a body that you can slip into a jacket pocket. With the firm's latest AF technology also on board, it's without doubt the most accomplished pocket camera on the market.

★★★★½ **Reviewed 5 Oct 2019**

Sony RX10 IV

● £1,499 ● www.sony.co.uk

This sets a new standard for superzoom cameras, with a 24-600mm equivalent lens, 20MP 1in sensor, and 24fps continuous shooting. Its SLR-shaped body hosts a large electronic viewfinder and a decent set of physical controls. It's the best all-in-one camera for wildlife or travel photography that you can buy right now.

★★★★★ **Reviewed 2 Dec 2017**

Canon EOS 250D

● £769 with 18-55mm IS lens ● www.canon.co.uk

One of the smallest DSLRs around, the EOS 250D strikes a great balance between portability and usability. It's equipped with a novice-friendly Guided Mode, while Canon's Dual Pixel CMOS sensor provides excellent autofocus in live view. Image quality is very good, delivering vibrant colours and plenty of fine detail.

★★★★☆

Reviewed
7 Sep 2019

Olympus OM-D E-M10 Mark IV

● £749 with 14-42mm lens ● www.olympus.co.uk

With a charismatic retro design, fine handling, highly effective in-body stabilisation and attractive JPEG output, Olympus has made a camera that's more pleasant to use than its entry-level competitors. Its 20MP sensor delivers good results up to ISO 3200 at least, and its tilting screen can be set to face forwards beneath the camera.

★★★★½

Reviewed
26 Sep
2020

Fujifilm X-T5

● £1,699 body only ● www.fujifilm.eu/uk

Fujifilm's latest X-T model is a great choice for serious enthusiast photographers. It boasts a 40MP APS-C sensor housed in a retro-styled body covered with traditional analogue control dials. Subject-detection autofocus, in-body stabilisation and Fujifilm's lovely colour modes round off an extremely desirable package.

★★★★★

Reviewed
3 Jan 2023

Canon EOS R50

● £899 with 15-45mm lens ● www.canon.co.uk

With the EOS R50, Canon has fitted some impressive technology into a compact and lightweight body. It boasts highly capable subject recognition autofocus coupled with rapid continuous shooting. Image quality is very pleasing too, with attractive files direct from the camera. It also works well with EF-mount DSLR lenses.

★★★★☆

Reviewed
6 Jun 2023

Fujifilm X-T50

● £1,299 body only ● www.fujifilm.eu/uk

Fujifilm's mid-range line takes a major step up, with a 40MP sensor and in-body image stabilisation. Traditional analogue dials control exposure settings, while the firm's peerless Film Simulation colour modes get their own selection dial for the first time. The compact body is ideal for travel.

★★★★★

Reviewed
30 Jul 2024

Panasonic Lumix GH6

● £1,399 body only ● www.panasonic.com/uk

Panasonic's flagship Micro Four Thirds camera is aimed at videographers, but holds its own when capturing stills too. Its 25MP sensor delivers plenty of detail, while enabling 5.7K recording at 60fps, or 4K at 120fps. Pro-spec video functionality and highly effective in-body stabilisation round off a fine package.

★★★★½

Reviewed
26 Apr 2022

Fujifilm X-S10

● £999 with 15-45mm lens ● www.fujifilm.eu/uk

Fujifilm's X-S10 brings a distinct change in design. It looks much like a conventional DSLR, with electronic dials for changing exposure settings. But you still get Fujifilm's signature fine image quality, along with in-body image stabilisation. The result is a camera that's perfect for APS-C DSLR users looking to upgrade to mirrorless.

★★★★★

Reviewed
23 Jan 2021

OM System OM-5

● £1,199 body only ● explore.omsystem.com

This small, fully featured and weather-sealed mirrorless camera is both a pleasure to use, and capable of great results. Its petite body finds space for an extensive complement of controls, along with class-leading 5-axis in-body image stabilisation, yet weighs in at just 414g. On-chip phase detection enables fast, decisive autofocus.

★★★★★

Reviewed
13 Dec 2022

OM System OM-1 Mark II

● £2,199 body only ● explore.omsystem.com

Updated version of this high-speed powerhouse gains some handy new features. It's capable of shooting at 120fps with focus fixed, or 50fps with AF, but now with double the buffer for extended bursts. AI subject detection recognises vehicles, animals and birds. It also boasts IP53-rated weather-sealing and includes class-leading stabilisation.

★★★★★

Review
12 Mar 2024

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Nikon Z f

● £2,149 body only ● www.nikon.co.uk

This lovely-looking full-frame mirrorless model combines plenty of substance with its classic retro styling. It boasts tactile top-plate dials for shutter speed, ISO and exposure compensation while delivering lovely image quality in both JPEG and raw. There's some cutting-edge technology on board too, including impressive subject detection autofocus.

★★★★½

Reviewed 9 Jan 2024

Sony Alpha 7 IV

● £2,179 body only ● www.sony.co.uk

Sony's enthusiast-focused full-frame mirrorless model sets a new standard in its class. Its 33MP full-frame sensor delivers excellent image quality, and it can shoot at up to 10fps. Its practically foolproof subject-detection AF can now recognise birds as well as humans and animals. A large, clear viewfinder and fully articulated touchscreen round off the package.

★★★★★

Reviewed 11 Dec 2021

Nikon D850

● £2,699 body only ● www.nikon.co.uk

This brilliant professional all-rounder provides a winning combination of high resolution and speed. Its 45.7MP sensor produces fine results at high ISOs, and the autofocus is incredibly responsive and accurate. Build quality and handling should satisfy the most demanding of users. It's an absolutely sensational camera capable of tackling any type of subject.

★★★★★

Reviewed 21 Oct 2017

Nikon Z 7II

● £2,899 body only ● www.nikon.co.uk

Nikon has delivered a sensible update to its flagship high-res model, with an additional SD card slot and slightly faster shooting. As before, its 45.7MP sensor gives stunning image quality, backed up by 5-axis in-body image stabilisation and fast, accurate autofocus. The viewfinder is superb, and F-mount SLR lenses can be used via the FTZ adapter.

★★★★½

Reviewed 6 Feb 2021

Nikon Z 8

● £3,789 body only ● www.nikon.co.uk

This stunning camera takes all the best bits of Nikon's flagship Z 9 and places them in a smaller, less-expensive body. Combining high resolution, rapid speed, cutting-edge autofocus and pro-level build, it's capable of shooting 45.7MP raw files at 20fps. It can also record 8K video. With its superb viewfinder and tilting rear screen, it's a stunningly capable camera.

★★★★★

Reviewed 11 Jul 2023

Canon EOS R6 Mark II

● £2,779 body only ● www.canon.co.uk

Based around a 24MP full-frame sensor, this brilliant all-rounder will do almost anything you might ask it to. It combines reliable subject-detection AF, rapid continuous shooting, and effective image stabilisation in a body that handles well and gives great results. It also works well with adapted EF-mount DSLR lenses.

★★★★★

Reviewed 21 Mar 2023

Sony Alpha 7R V

● £3,699 body only ● www.sony.co.uk

With its 61MP full-frame sensor, the A7R V provides class-leading image quality while adding a whole array of improvements over its predecessor. These include subject-detection AF, a larger, more detailed viewfinder, and a more flexible rear LCD design. For those whose needs are more about image quality than speed, it's probably the best full-frame camera you can buy.

★★★★★

Reviewed 17 Jan 2023

Leica M11

● £7,299 body only ● uk.leica-camera.com

Leica's 60MP full-frame rangefinder is a beautful anachronism – a camera type that has been obsolete for decades, yet which still remains an object of desire for many photographers. This elegant mix of the old and the modern offers triple-resolution raw recording, including 36MP and 18MP options, and vastly improved battery life. It's a really lovely camera that can deliver stunning results.

★★★★½

Reviewed 8 Mar 2022

Fujifilm GFX100S

● £5,499 body only ● www.fujifilm.eu/uk

Fujifilm's second-generation super-high resolution camera places a 102MP medium-format sensor in a body the size of a full-frame DSLR. On-chip phase detection provides rapid autofocus while in-body stabilisation allows the camera to be used handheld easily. It's perfect if you need to shoot in the field with compromising image quality.

★★★★★

Reviewed 8 May 2021

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Billingham Hadley Pro 2020

● £293 ● www.billingham.co.uk

The latest model in this iconic line of British-made satchel-style bags includes some well-considered updates, such as a detachable shoulder strap. It's impeccably constructed from premium materials to keep your kit protected, including Billingham's signature triple-layer canvas that's impermeable to water. It's pricey, but will last for decades.
★★★★★ **Reviewed 5 Oct 2019**

Vanguard Veo Active 42M

● £160 ● www.vanguardworld.co.uk

Vanguards's VEO Active backpacks are designed for hiking. This model is small enough to carry on a plane, but still has space for a camera and three lenses, plus a 13in laptop and personal items. It offers excellent protection thanks to its metal frame and padded insert.
★★★★★
Reviewed 19 Jul 2022

Gitzo Adventury 30L

● £239 ● www.gitzo.com/uk-en

This sizeable backpack will hold a pro-spec DSLR with a 70-200mm lens attached and a second body plus up to 4 lenses. An expandable roll top provides plenty of space for personal items, and the bag also boasts tablet and laptop compartments. It's comfortable to carry fully loaded and offers first-class protection.
★★★★★
Reviewed 8 Sep 2018

Essential Film Holder Kit

● £90 ● www.clifforth.co.uk

Many photographers either still enjoy shooting film, or have old negatives and slides that they'd like to digitise. Probably the best way to do this is to copy them using a DSLR or mirrorless camera. This easy-to-use device holds film flat over a lightbox for copying. It gives excellent results and is much quicker than using a scanner. ★★★★★
Reviewed 29 Aug 2020

NiSi Bluetooth Remote Control

● £29.90 ● nisioptics.co.uk

If you use strong neutral density filters, this device makes it much easier to work with the long exposures required. It connects to your smartphone by Bluetooth and is controlled by NiSi's free ND Calculator app. Camera connection cables cost £5.90 each.
★★★★½ **Reviewed 11 Jan 2022**

Novo Mantis T3 Mini Travel Tripod

● £70 ● www.ukdigital.co.uk

This neat 27cm-tall mini tripod has two-section carbon-fibre legs that can be set to three different angles, and chunky rubber feet that unscrew to reveal ground spikes. The matched MBH-25 ball head (£60) provides impressive strength, and an optional centre column is available for £30.
★★★★★
Reviewed 6 Feb 2021

Manfrotto 190 Go! MT190GOC4

● £299 ● www.manfrotto.com/uk-en

With 4-section carbon fibre legs that can each be set to four angles, this sturdy, versatile tripod achieves a maximum height of 147cm while folding down to 45cm, and weighs 1.35kg. But its party trick is a centre column that can be set horizontally for overhead or low-level shooting.
★★★★★
Reviewed 1 Jun 2019

Benro GD3WH

● £169 ● www.benroeu.com

This relatively lightweight and portable geared head employs an Arca Swiss type quick release. Three large control knobs, one for each axis of movement, drive the camera directly in the corresponding direction, allowing highly accurate setting of composition. With its sturdy magnesium alloy construction, it's rated to support a 6kg load.
★★★★★ **Reviewed 26 May 2018**

Vanguard VEO 2S AM-264TR

● £99 ● www.vanguardworld.co.uk

This unusual monopod boasts an extended height of 1630mm, a folded height of 565mm and a maximum load capacity of 6kg. Three foldable legs at the base provide a tri-stand platform, and are linked to the four-section carbon fibre leg via a ball joint that allows smooth panning and tilting motions.
★★★★★
Reviewed 30 May 2015

VANGUARD
VEO

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Adaptalux Studio Nature LED Macro Combo Pack

● £372 ● www.adaptalux.com

This clever modular LED system is perfect for lighting small subjects creatively. The pack includes a control pod with a built-in rechargeable battery, four flexible lighting arms (two white, one blue and one green), plus three diffusers and two colour filters. Always-on LED lighting makes it easy to visualise the results in real time.

★★★★★

Reviewed 20 Sep 2022

RØDE VideoMicro II

● £82 ● en.rode.com

RØDE's updated compact on-camera video microphone brings a number of welcome improvements. Along with a much-improved Helix shock-mount, it comes with cables for use with both cameras and smartphones, plus a choice of foam or furry windshields. Audio quality is a dramatic improvement over most cameras' built-in mics, too.

★★★★★ **Reviewed 20 Jun 2023**

Tenba Tools Cable Duo 4

● £20 ● uk.tenba.com

Not all handy accessories have to cost a fortune. This well-designed tech organiser pouch features a dual-compartment layout, with a shallow space on one side for cables, and a deeper one on the other for such things as battery chargers or computer mice. The simple rectangular design fits easily into a bag and the tough transparent covers make it easy to see what's inside.

★★★★★

Reviewed 20 Sep 2022

Formatt Hitech Onyx 85mm Seascape Kit

● £345 ● www.formatt-hitech.com

This 85mm filter kit is ideal for APS-C or Micro Four Thirds users. It includes a polariser, 6-stop neutral density, and 3-stop soft-edge and hard-edge ND grads. It'll fit filter threads up to 77mm, with step rings for 72mm, 67mm and 58mm supplied in the box.

★★★★½

Reviewed 6 Feb 2021

Calibrite ColorChecker Studio

● £500 ● www.colourconfidence.com

Previously known as X-Rite i1 Studio, this kit enables users to adopt a completely colour-managed workflow, from capture through display to print. It allows profiling of cameras, scanners, monitors, projectors and printers, and works with both Mac and Windows computers. It's a great tool for any photographer who likes to print at home.

★★★★★ **Reviewed 19 Jan 2019**

Kase Revolution Magnetic Circular Entry Level Kit

● £230-£285 ● www.kasefilters.com

These clever kits include circular polarising, 3-stop and 6-stop neutral density filters that snap magnetically onto adapters that screw into your lens. This considerably speeds up the process of using filters and encourages you to use them creatively. Kits are available in 77mm, 82mm, and 95mm sizes, with adapter rings from 49mm up.

★★★★★

Reviewed 21 Feb 2023

Epson Expression Photo XP970

● £219 ● www.epson.co.uk

An update to the XP960, which won our coveted gold award, this impressive multifunctional unit provides A3 printing ability while retaining a compact footprint. Along with a conventional USB connection, it can print over Wi-Fi, or directly from an SD card or USB stick, controlled using the excellent colour LCD touchscreen. Other useful features include an A4 scanner and double-sided document printing.

★★★★★

Biolite Charge 80 PD

● £70 ● uk.bioliteenergy.com

Powerbanks can be invaluable when you want to keep shooting for longer. This device houses a 20,000mAh Li-ion battery, which is capable of replenishing the average camera battery up to ten times. It can also be used to power certain cameras directly.

★★★★★ **Reviewed 10 Jul 2021**

Fujifilm Instax Mini Link 2

● £115 ● www.instax.co.uk

Powered by a built-in rechargeable battery, this smart little printer connects to your smartphone via Bluetooth and is controlled using an attractively designed and intuitive app. It's small enough to slip into a coat pocket or bag, and delivers gorgeous little prints with fine detail and vivid colour.

★★★★★

Reviewed 30 Aug 2022

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F/2.8 R LM OIS WR MACRO
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USED SONY
FE 50MM
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was £1,239
only **£1,079.10***
*Use voucher code USED-AP
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SAVE £159

USED SONY
FE 135MM
F/1.8 GM
was £1,009
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*Use voucher code USED-AP
Product ID: **UP-7240595G-2448802**

SAVE £90

USED SONY
E 10-20MM
F/4 G
was £589
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NOCTILUX-M 50MM
F/1.2 ASPH
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USED PANASONIC
GH5 II
BODY ONLY
was £749
only **£539.10***
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Product ID: **UP-P016556K-252821960**

SAVE £353

USED PANASONIC
LEICA 10-25MM
F/1.7 DG VARIO-SUMMILUX
was £1,289
only **£935.10***
*Use voucher code USED-AP
Product ID: **UP-P241309F-2446240**

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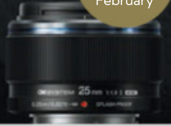

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RF 100-500 F4.5/7.1 L IS USM	£2299
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18-200 F3.5/5.6 IS EFS	£299
24-70 F2.8 USM LII box	£999
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50 F1.2 L USM box	£799
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70-200 F2.8 IS USM LII	£899
70-300 F4/5.6 IS USM L	£699
70-300 F4/5.6 IS USM II Nano	£499
75-300 F4.5/5.6	£149
85 F1.2 U L..£799 85 F1.8 U	£299
100 F2.8 IS USM L macro	£699
100 F2.8 USM macro box	£299
100-400 F4.5/5.6 LII box	£1499
100-400 F4.5/5.6 LII box	£999
100-400 f4.5-5.6 IS USM I Box	£699
180 F3.5 L USM macro	£699
200-400 F4 IS USM	£4999
300 F2.8 IS USM LII	£2999
300 F4 IS USM L box	£599
400 F4 DO IS II USM	£3799
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1.4x or 2x extender MKIII each	£329

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10 F2.8 EX DC HSM	£249
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12-24 F4.5/5.6 II DG	£399
14-24 F2.8 Art box	£799
18-200 F3.5/6.3 DC OS	£199
20 F1.4 DG Art box	£399
24 F1.4 Art	£399
24-70 F2.8 Art OS HSM	£899
24-105 F4 DG OS box	£399
35 F1.4 Art	£399
50 F1.4 Art box	£399
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105 F2.8 EX DG HSM OS	£329
120-300 F2.8 OS Sport	£1199
150 F2.8 EX DG OS	£399
150-600 F5/6.3 DG OS sport	£999
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TC1401 1.4x extender	£149

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TAMRON 90 F2.8 Di	£199
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18-35 F3.5/4.5 AFS	£399
18-55 F3.5/5.6 AF VR DX	£99
18-105 F3.5/5.6 VR DX AFS	£149
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18-300 F3.5/6.3 VR DX	£399
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105 F2.8 EX DG HSM OS	£329
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2x extender	£49
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150 F3.5 N	£199
WLF fits 645 Super/Pro	£199
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RB 67 Pro S body	£399
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180 F4.5	£199
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35 F3.5 FA HD	£699
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55 F2.8 D FA	£599
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150-300 F5.6 FA ED box	£499
200 F4 FA.....£399 300 F5.6 FA	£499
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135 F4 macro..£299 165 F4 leaf	£499
200 F4 latest box	£249
300 F4 latest..£199 400 F4 early	£399
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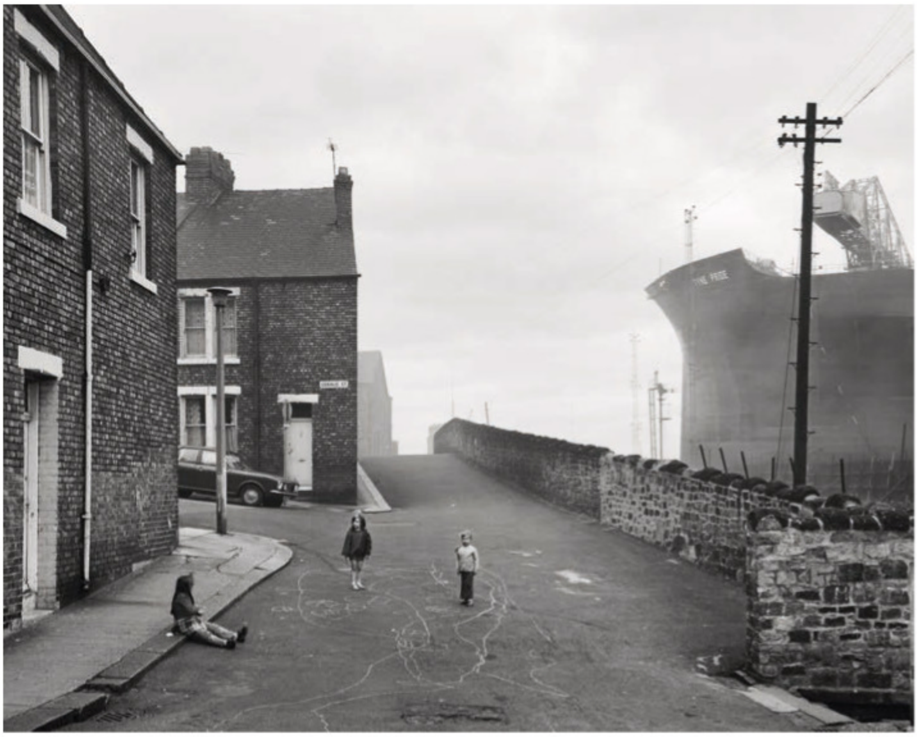
Final Analysis

Tracy Marshall-Grant considers...

Girls playing in the street, Wallsend, Tyneside, 1976, by Chris Killip



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I have been working with the archive of the one-of-a-kind Chris Killip, since I was asked in August 2021, with my husband Ken Grant, to produce a large retrospective of his work. It would include a touring exhibition and a monograph and would mark the first anniversary of his death the previous October. The development of this retrospective consumed Ken and I and would lead to an award-winning exhibition at The Photographers' Gallery in October 2022. A follow-on tour saw us exhibit it at Newcastle's Baltic Arts Centre, and travel with it to venues in Frankfurt and the Netherlands. It has been a whirlwind three years so at this stage of its final show I felt it was time to produce one of the key images from the tour for this column.

This image is from what we have called 'Early Work'. For those unfamiliar with him Chris Killip is a Manx photographer who after discovering the work of Cartier-Bresson in 1963 as a 17-year-old, decided to become a photographer, subsequently saving up his fare to leave the island by becoming a beach photographer for a summer and finally moving to London to work with Adrian Flowers in 1964. He established himself as a sought-after photographers' assistant and immersed himself in the London cultural scene. In 1969 he decided to return to the Isle of Man to focus on the first of the long-term bodies of work that would define his career. These works focused on people and place.

Curiosity

This image is from one of these bodies of work. After his time on the Isle of Man, Killip was commissioned by the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1972 to photograph several of North England's cities where he found himself drawn to the mills, tenement housing, and workplaces.

Looking at this image you can see such a curiosity. He has kept his distance, allowing life and the children in the streets to carry on as normal, not interrupted or disturbed by this man with his camera and tripod – despite one child curiously studying him. This approach also allows him to capture the full setting of this street, the houses, the road and the shipyard right next door with only a wall depicting the breakpoint between the children's play and the enormous hull of the *Tyne Pride* ship.

The image allows you to feel. You feel the cold, the damp, the smells of industry, you can feel the ground beneath the seated child and almost taste the chalk in the air from their playful scribbles on the street. Like so many of Killip's images this one prompts so many questions and emotions – who they are, which house do they live in, do they even notice the ship?

In 1975, Killip moved to Newcastle to undertake a British Gas / Northern Arts Fellowship. During his free time, he took photographs of the shipyards near his new home, as well as the coalmining towns of Castleford and Workington. This helped him gain an understanding of the industrial regions of the North and build a connection with the communities. This connection would benefit him in his later work. This picture was taken during this period and is one of four images of this street in the retrospective exhibition. Killip visited this street over and over, year after year, and the variation in industry and deprivation as shipbuilding decreased is apparent. The final image shows the eventual demolition of most of the houses in the street. Like this image, Chris Killip captured in this set the people and the place, the changes and emotions as society changed in the cities of that period.

Chris Killip: 1946-2020, edited by Ken Grant and Tracy Marshall-Grant, is available from Thames & Hudson.

Tracy Marshall-Grant is an arts director, curator and producer. She has recently been deputy director of the new Centre for British Photography and director of development for the Royal Photographic Society. Previously she has worked for the Bristol Photo Festival, Look Photo Biennial 2019, Open Eye Gallery and Belfast Exposed Gallery. Tracy co-curated the award-winning Chris Killip Retrospective exhibition which was on show for five months in 2023 at the Baltic gallery in Gateshead and has since been on tour in Germany and the Netherlands.

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